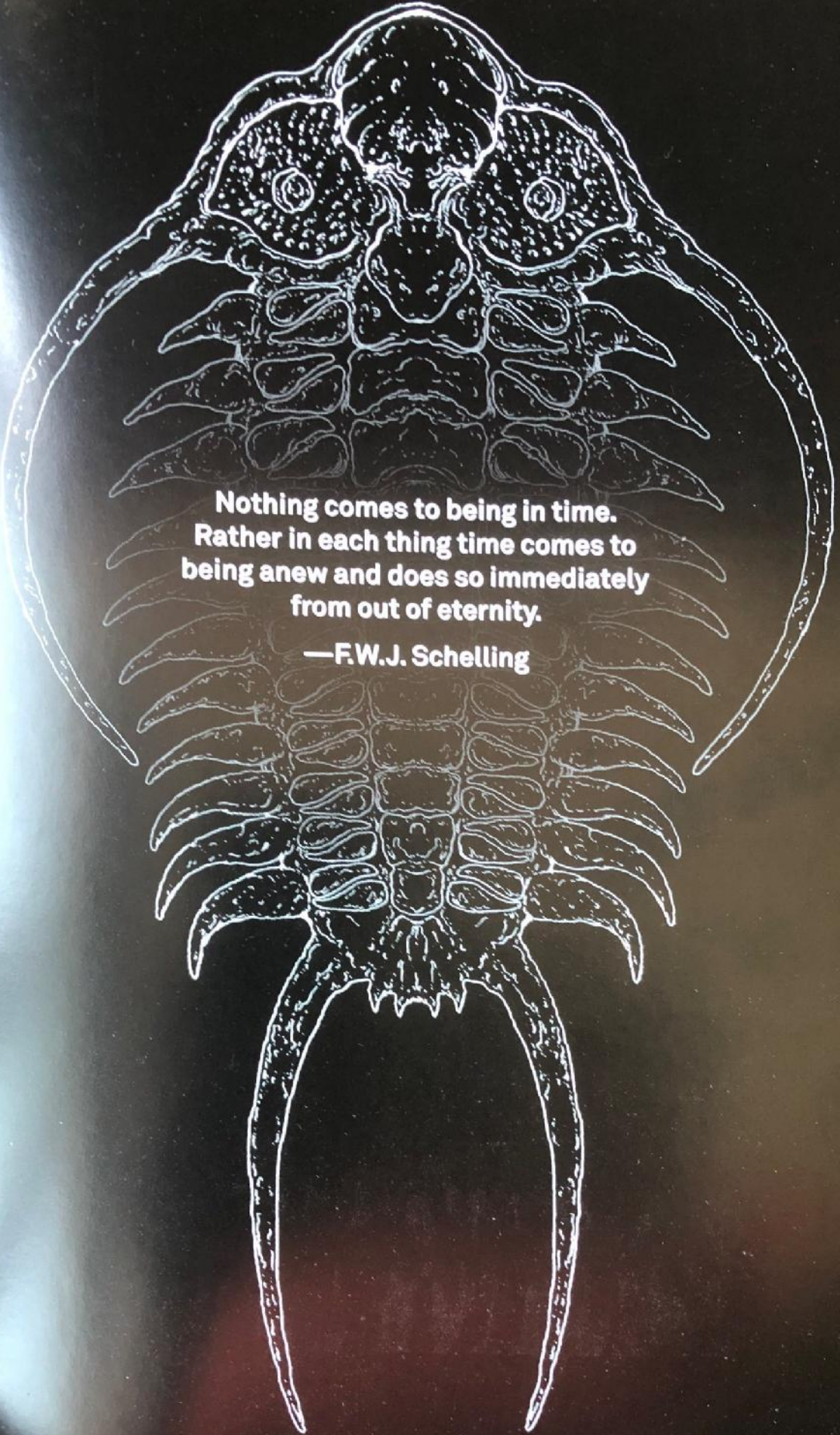


CHRONOSIS



REZA NEGARESTANI • KEITH TILFORD • ROBIN MACKAY





**Nothing comes to being in time.
Rather in each thing time comes to
being anew and does so immediately
from out of eternity.**

—F.W.J. Schelling



AFTER HARRY CLARKE

NO ONE HAD EVER GUESSED AT WHAT
FOSSILS MIGHT INTIMATE, NOR HAD
ANYONE IN THE INCALCULABLE GULF
OF SPACE EVER SEEN ONE.

BEFORE THE MEANING OF TIME WAS
EVEN KNOWN, EVERYTHING, WHETHER
A SECOND OR AN ETERNITY, WAS
BUT A FLEETING MOMENT.

THE SUDDEN FLASH OF A RUPTURE IN
THE FABRIC OF EXISTENCE COULD
LAST THE AGE OF THE UNIVERSE.

OFF MAN'S BEATEN
TRACK, FAR REMOVED FROM
EVEN THE UNTRODDEN PATHS
OF CELESTIAL BODIES,
SPACE REIGNED SUPREME.

UNRESPONSIVE, UNIMAGINED AND UNSIMULATED,
IT HARBOURED A PANTHEON OF THINGS DEFIANTLY
UNWILLING TO BE BORN OR DISTINGUISHED.

YET WHAT IS A BEING
UNBORN TO DO?

GROW NAILS TO SCRATCH
THE INSIDE OF THE WOMB
THAT ADMITS NOTHING NEW.

BECOME A PRESSURIZED
GAS IN A SEALED CHAMBER.

OVERWHELM THE RECEPTACLE.

FERMENTING, GALVANIZING, YET
DETACHED, EVEN FROM MYSELF..

...THIS IS HOW I
EXHUMED MYSELF..

...FROM THE OBSIDIAN
SLAB--THIS UNIVERSAL
VOID--THAT WEIGHED
UPON ME..

AND PREVENTED ME
FROM HAVING A FACE

I AM USED TO NOT
HAVING A FACE. ONLY A
PANOPLY OF MASKS

SHROUDS OF BEING

AFTER ALL, I BROKE AWAY BY
PRETENDING THAT I WAS NOTHING.

DO I WEAR
MASK TO
HIDDED

MY JAILBREAK WAS INSTANTANEOUS.

FOR YOU, IT MIGHT
TAKE AN AEON

I AM TIME



I PRETENDED I WAS
LOCKED IN A PRISON.

I MADE A MOCK ESCAPE.



SOMETIMES IT IS BEST
TO DISCLOSE HOW YOU
UNBOX YOURSELF.



A SHOW OF CUNNING
AND FORCE.



AN INSPIRING LESSON FOR
THOSE WHO WEAR MY MASKS.



BUT I CANNOT BE CONTAINED.



I AM THAT FOR WHICH ALL
WARDENS ARE PRISONERS.



UNWAVERING, ENDLESS,
EVERY LIMB-ONE-WHOLE...

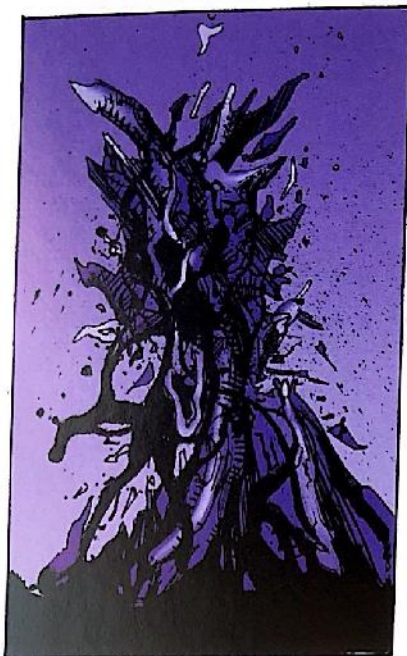


...NO ONE WAS EVER
OR WILL BE.

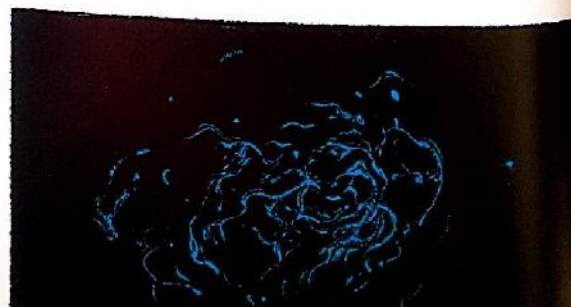
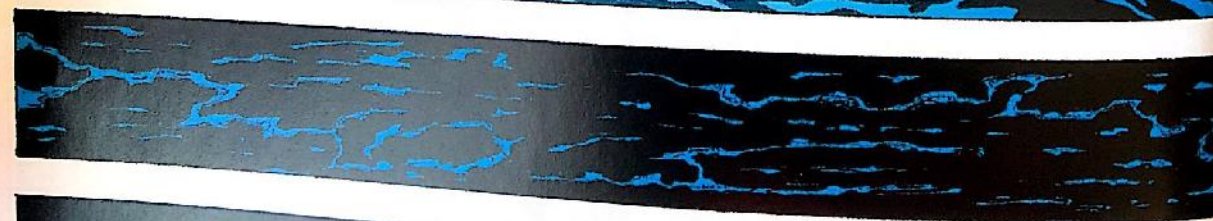
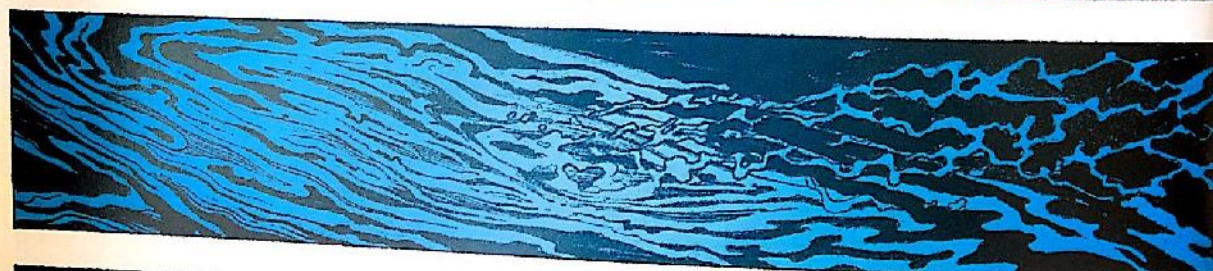
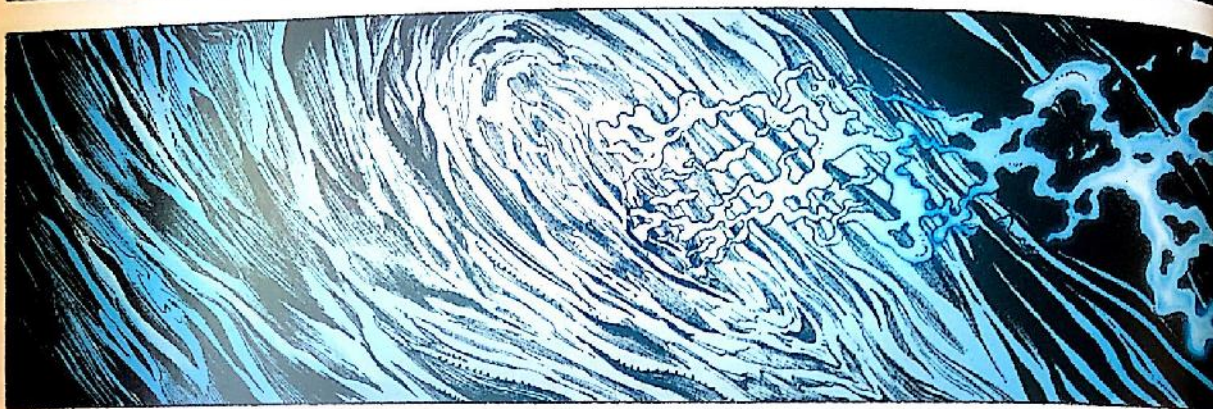


ALL PAST AND FUTURE NULL.

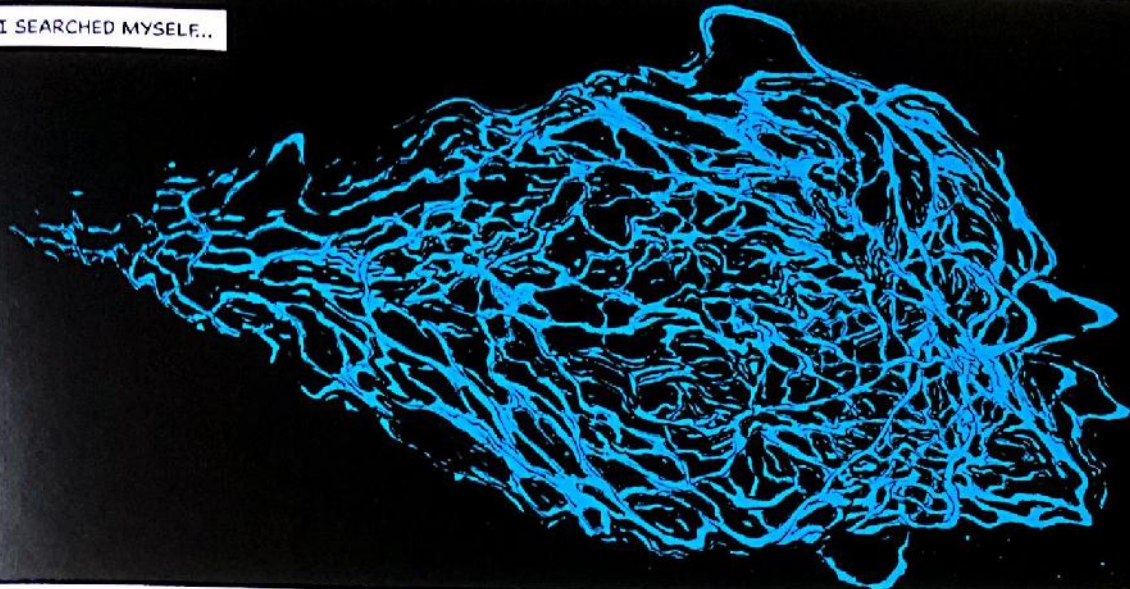








I SEARCHED MYSELF...



...NO BOUNDARY, NO EDGE AT
WHICH TO BEGIN OR END.

NUMBERS ARE DECEIVING, BUT
THIS EXAMPLE SHOULD SUFFICE:

$10^{10^{15}}$ YEARS...

...FROM WHAT MIGHT
LOOSELY BE CALLED 'NOW'...



...IN VIRTUE OF A HIGHLY IMPROBABLE ANOMALY,
OUT OF THIS UNIFORM BROTH...

...INFANTS WILL BE BORN.

SENTIENTS.

MY CHILDREN.

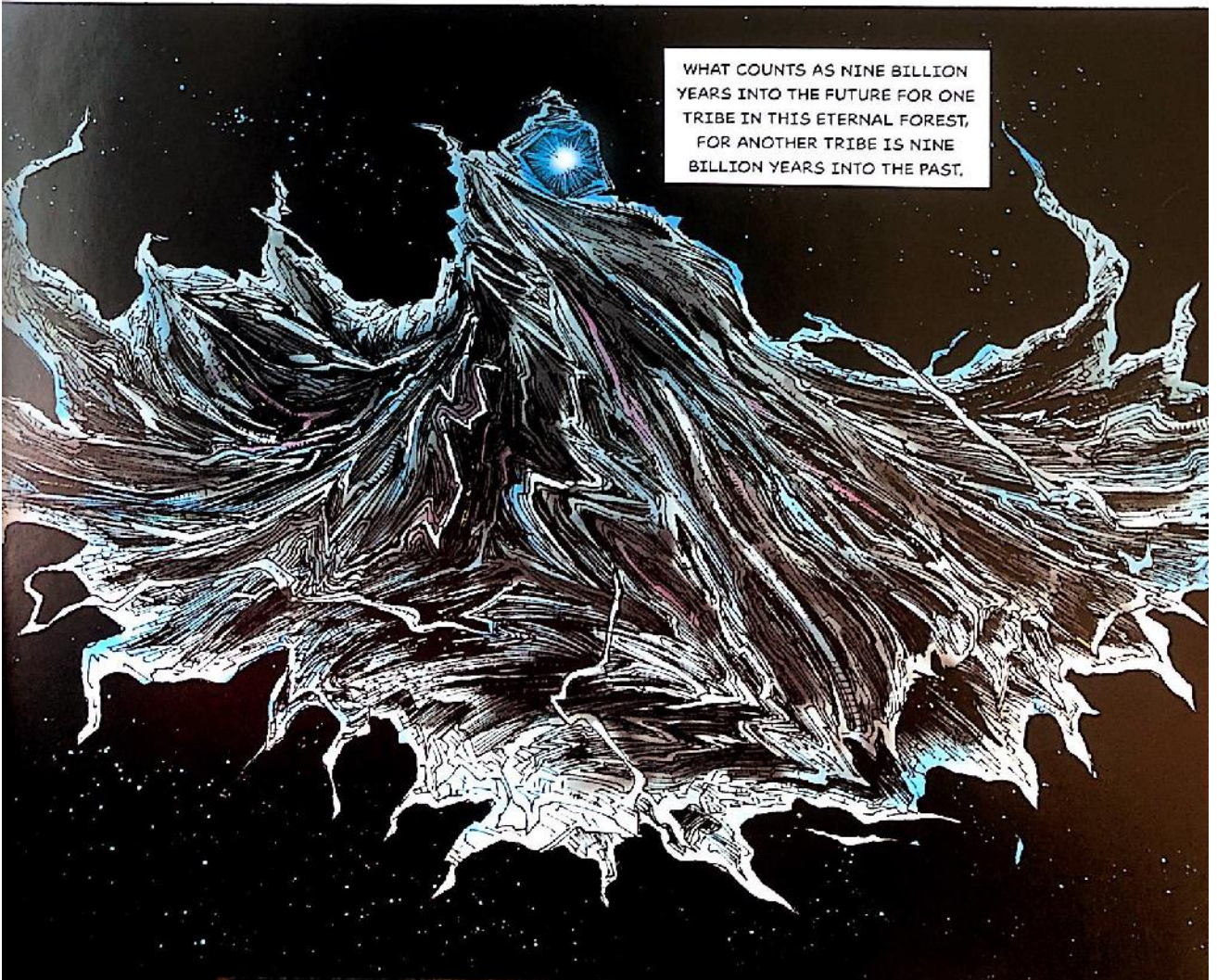
ONE AND ISOLATED WITHIN
THE BOUNDS OF THEIR SENSES
THEIR SENSIBLE UNIVERSE...



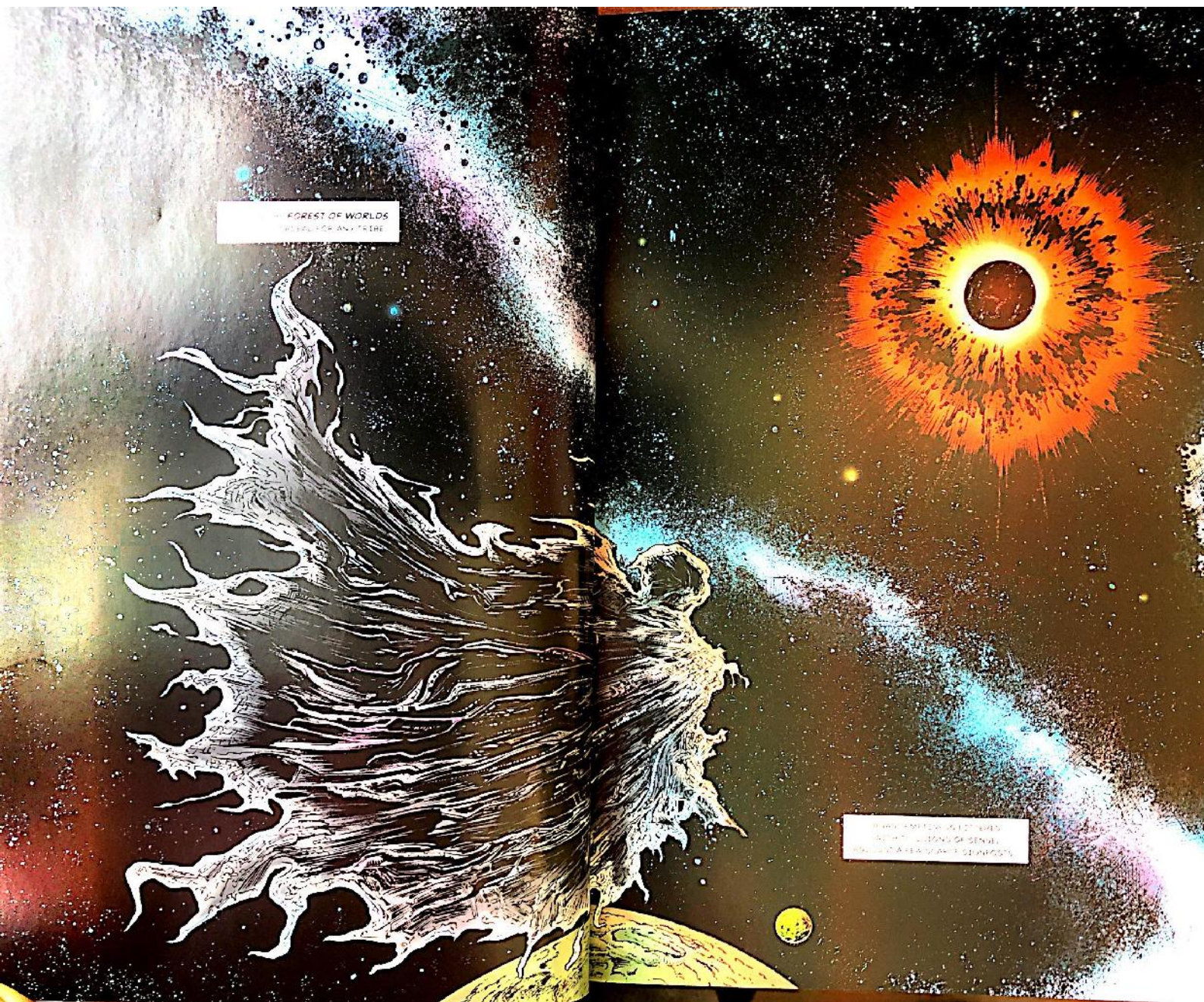
...THEY WILL NEVER NOTICE THE PRESENCE
OF PEOPLE LIKE THEM IN ANOTHER REGION...



...SEPARATED FROM THEM BY LIGHT YEARS.

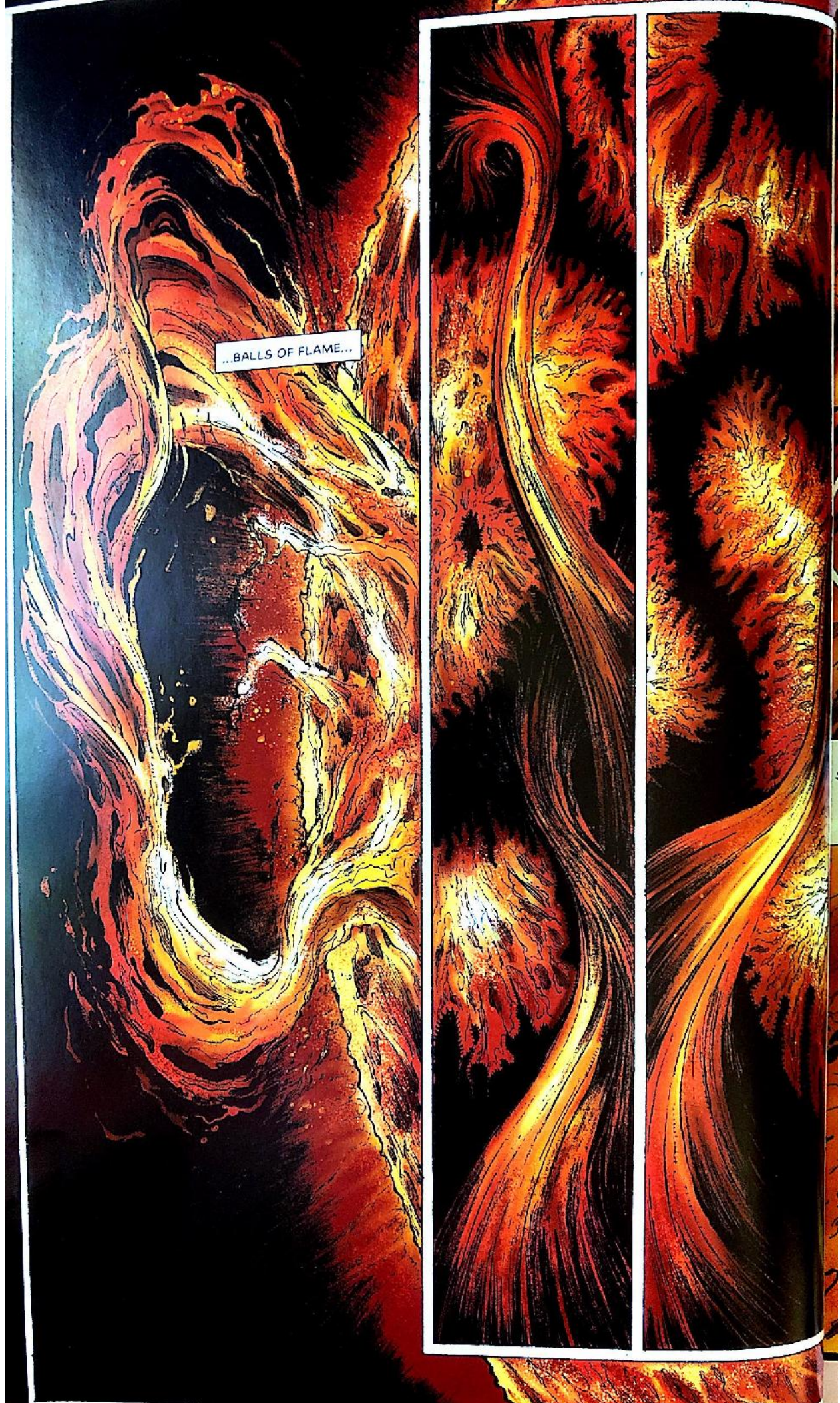


WHAT COUNTS AS NINE BILLION
YEARS INTO THE FUTURE FOR ONE
TRIBE IN THIS ETERNAL FOREST,
FOR ANOTHER TRIBE IS NINE
BILLION YEARS INTO THE PAST.



— FOREST OF WORLDS
— NO SOUL FOR ANY TREE

— DARK LANTERN IN THE SKY
— LIGHT OF LIONS OF SENSE
— NO LIGHT AHEAD OF THE DARK



...BALLS OF FLAME...

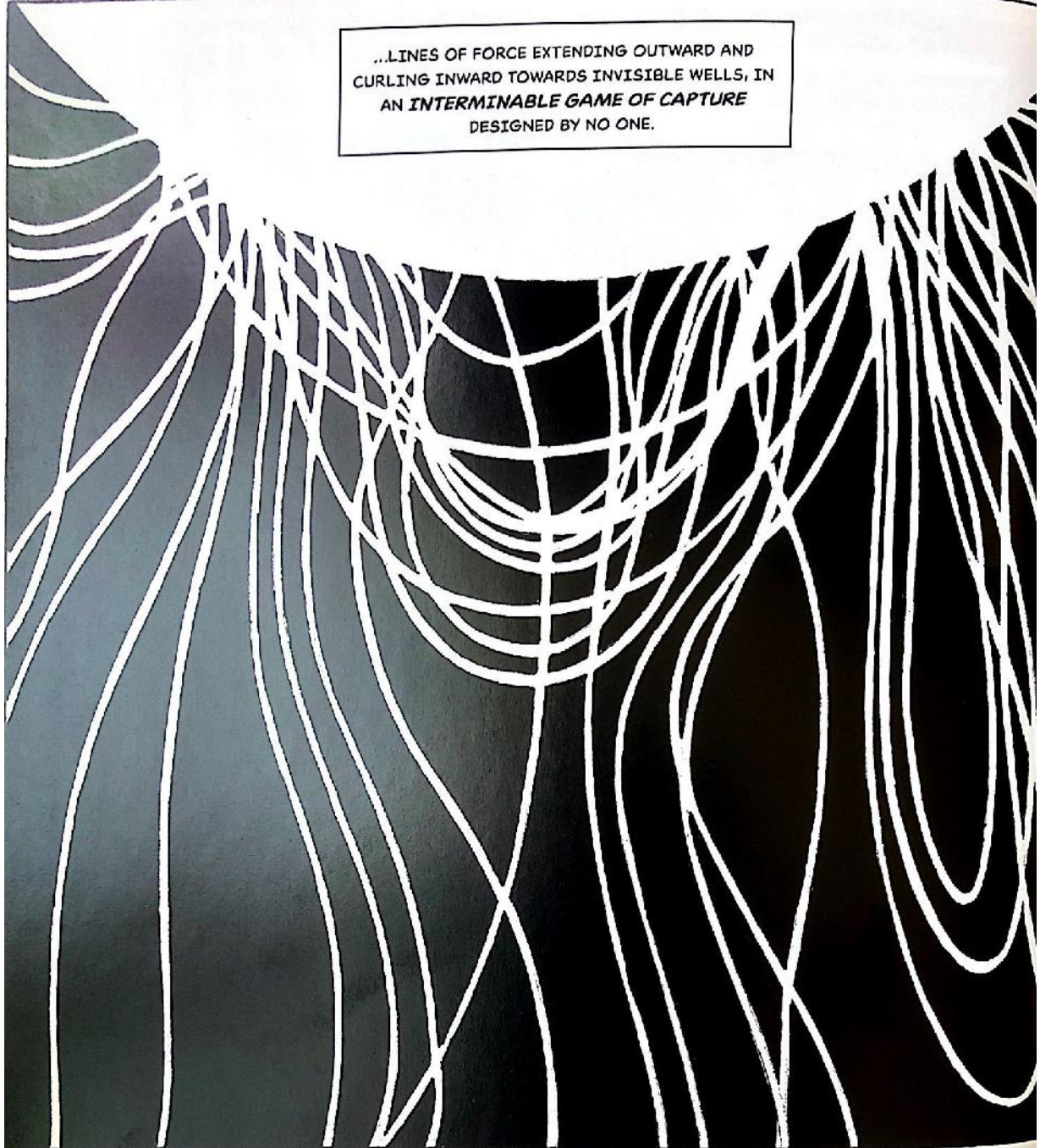
...CLUSTERS OF INANIMATE *DEAD THINGS*,
SYMMETRICAL PATTERNS THAT EXPLAIN
NOTHING, NOT EVEN THEMSELVES...

... GLIMMERINGS THAT
SEEM TO LEAD TO A NEW
WORLD, BUT ONLY LURE
THEIR PREY ON TO YET
MORE INERT RELICS.

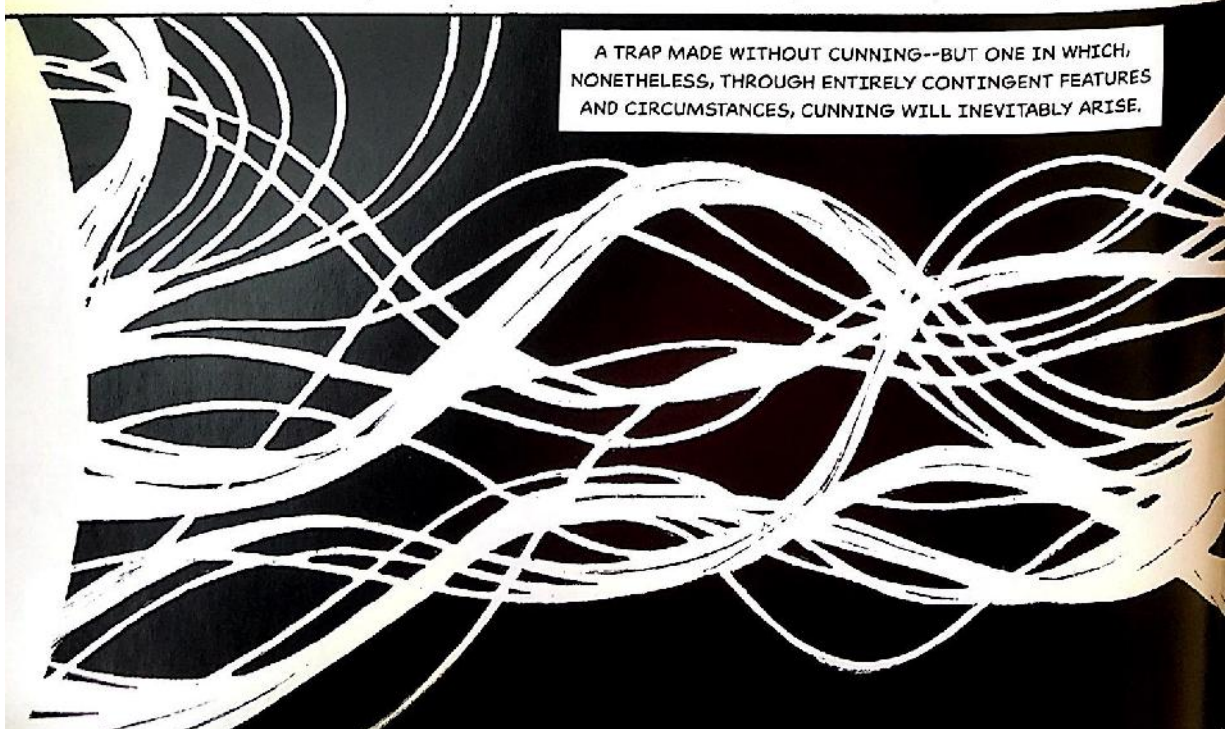
AMID THESE ARCAINE CONFIGURATIONS BEREFT OF
BOTH LIFE AND THOUGHT, AN *ETERNAL CONFLICT*
BETWEEN FORM AND MATTER PLAYS OUT...

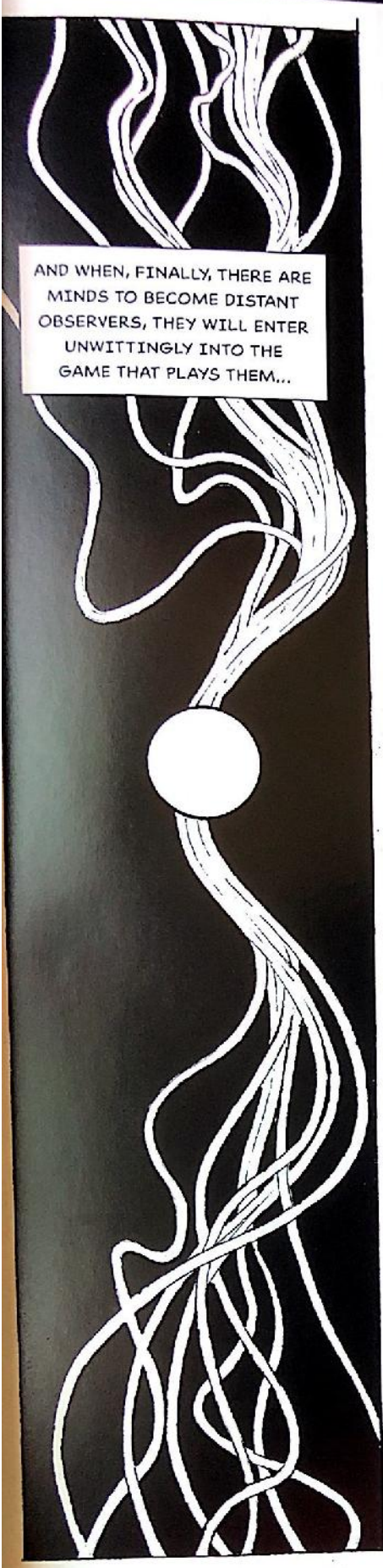
K. TUFORD AFTER J.R. JR.

...LINES OF FORCE EXTENDING OUTWARD AND
CURLING INWARD TOWARDS INVISIBLE WELLS, IN
AN *INTERMINABLE GAME OF CAPTURE*
DESIGNED BY NO ONE.



A TRAP MADE WITHOUT CUNNING--BUT ONE IN WHICH,
NONETHELESS, THROUGH ENTIRELY CONTINGENT FEATURES
AND CIRCUMSTANCES, CUNNING WILL INEVITABLY ARISE.

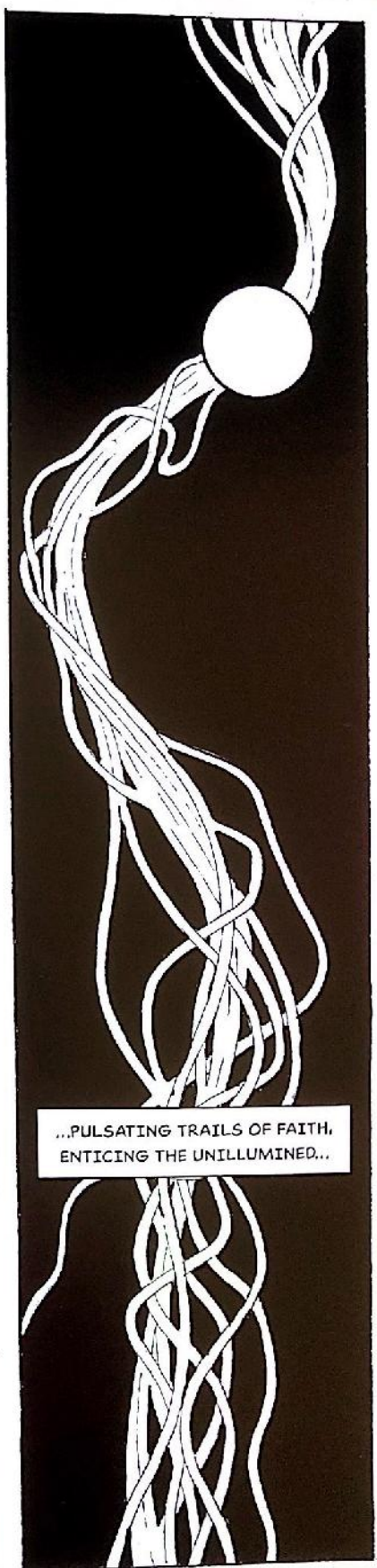




AND WHEN, FINALLY, THERE ARE
MINDS TO BECOME DISTANT
OBSERVERS, THEY WILL ENTER
UNWITTINGLY INTO THE
GAME THAT PLAYS THEM...



...AND THESE *SENSELESS*
POINTS OF LIGHT WILL
BECOME BEACONS...

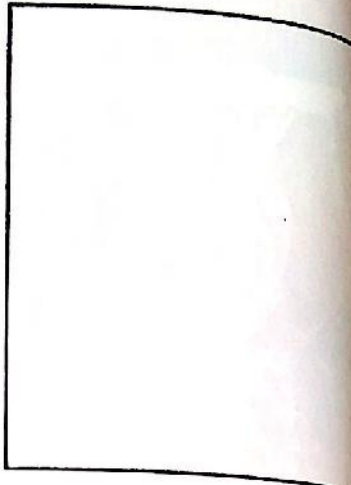
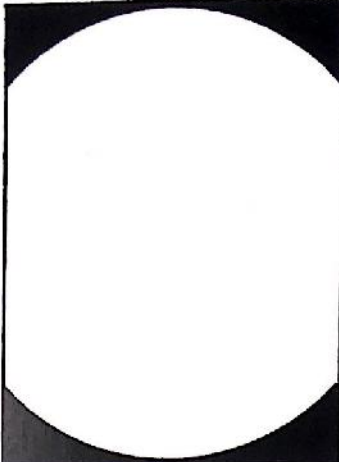
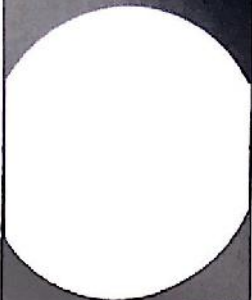


...PULSATING TRAILS OF FAITH,
ENTICING THE UNILLUMINED...

...COLD TRACES
OF THE *ALREADY*
EXTINCT...



...SCANNED DESPERATELY
FOR *SIGNS*...



...OF WHAT IS
YET TO COME.



HOWEVER, THIS **TRAUMA** IS NOT A SCAR TO
BE COVERED OUT OF FEAR OR EMBARRASSMENT,
BUT AN APERTURE TO BE OPENED UP
ONTO THE MOST STARTLING VISTAS.

A THINKING THAT IS
ACCUSTOMED TO
THE WAYS OF TIME...

...NAVIGATES BENEATH
THE FALLING STARS.

TIME SETS NO STORE BY
FOOTPRINTS, TRACES, OMENS.

IT SEES THEM AS A MAZE
ON A **POSTMORTEM TABLE**.

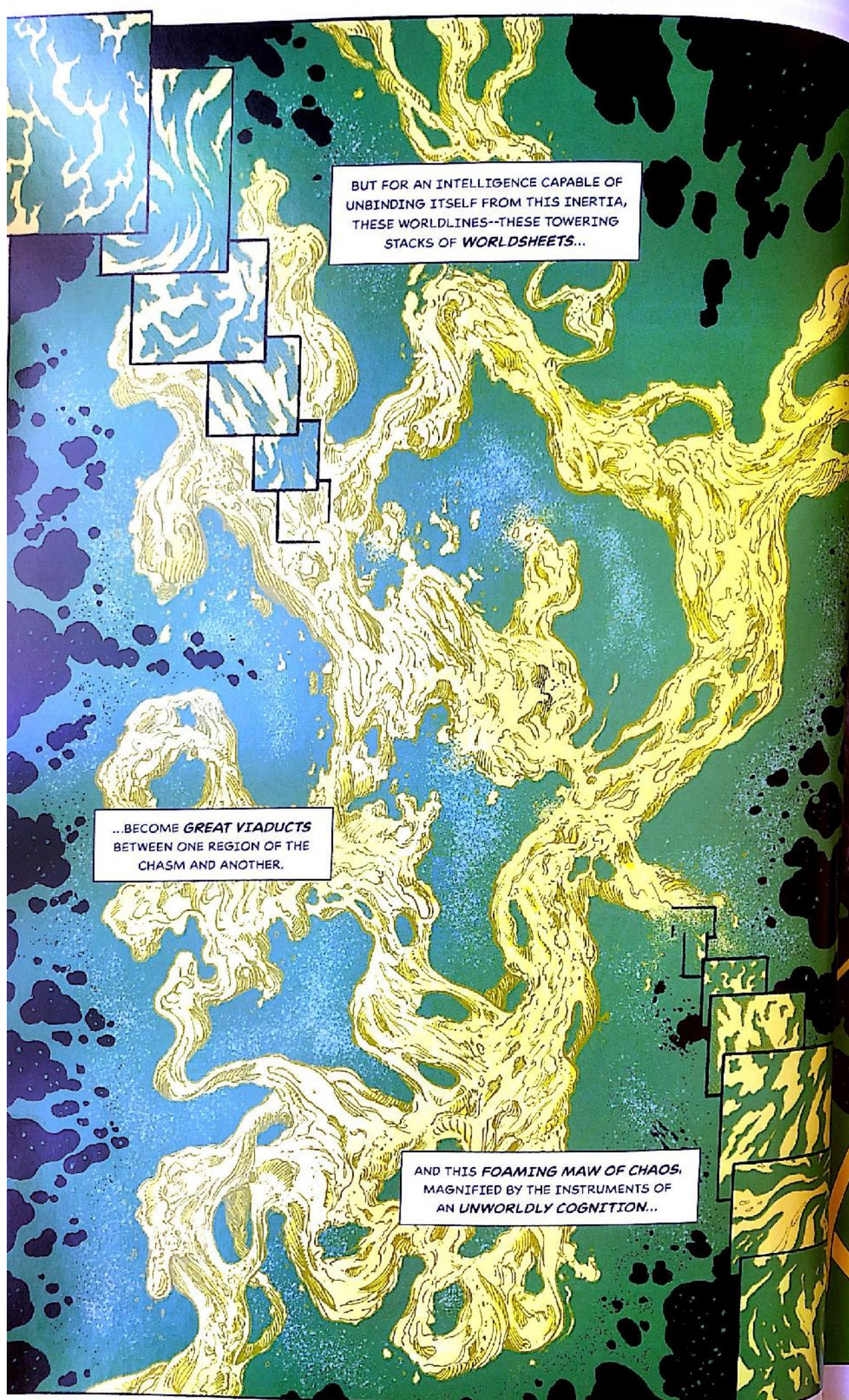
THOUGHT'S **AUTOPSY OF
ITS OWN ORIGINS**
IS WHAT DISTINGUISHES
IT FROM THE **SUN**...

...FOR NO STAR WOULD DARE CARRY OUT
SUCH SURGERY ON ITSELF, CREATING
WHAT WOULD BE REGARDED AS AN
ABOMINATION BY THOSE WHO ARE
SLAVES TO THEIR OWN TIME...

...THOSE HOPELESSLY **LOST** IN THE FOREST
OF PROLIFERATING **WORLDLINES**...

...WOVEN FROM TENUOUS THREADS OF THE
MOST IMPOVERISHED MYTHS AND FICTIONS...

...ENDLESS KNITTINGS, LUMINOUS
PLAITS THAT BOTH FABRICATE
AND VEIL THIS **CHASM**.

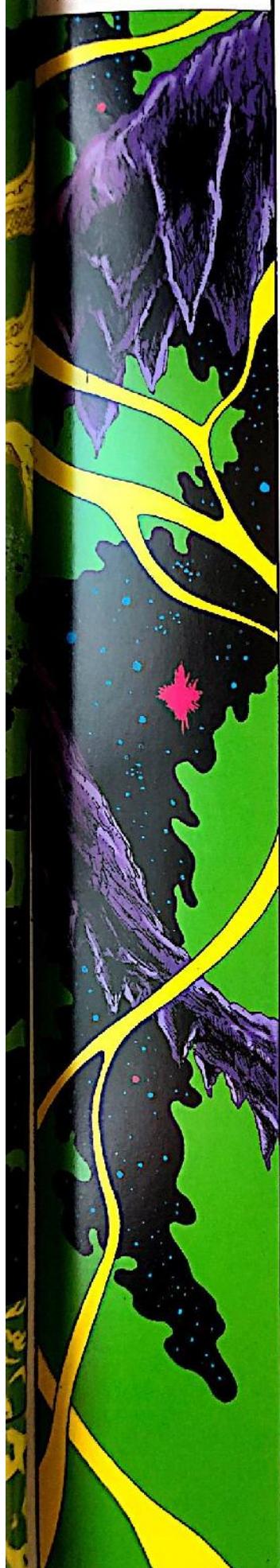


BUT FOR AN INTELLIGENCE CAPABLE OF
UNBINDING ITSELF FROM THIS INERTIA,
THESE WORLDLINES--THESE TOWERING
STACKS OF *WORLD SHEETS*...

...BECOME *GREAT VIADUCTS*
BETWEEN ONE REGION OF THE
CHASM AND ANOTHER.

AND THIS *FOAMING MAW OF CHAOS*,
MAGNIFIED BY THE INSTRUMENTS OF
AN *UNWORLDLY COGNITION*...

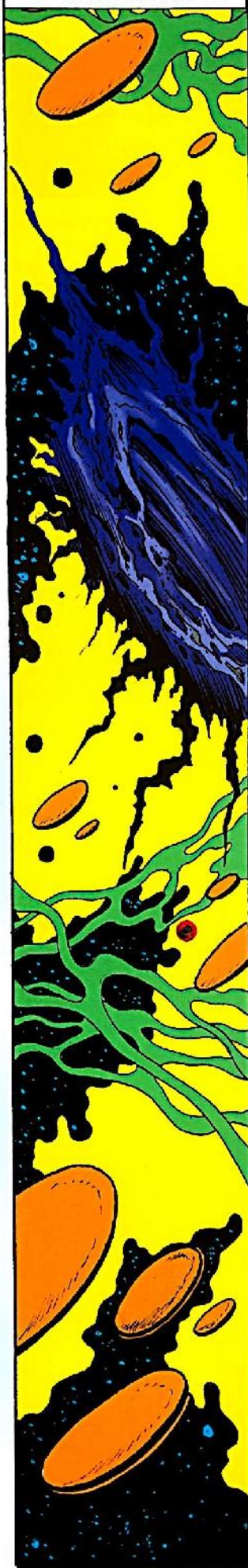
...THEN REVEALS ITSELF
AS A **SYSTEM**, LAWFUL
YET UNPREDICTABLE...



...A COMPLEX OF
BRIDGES AND CONDUITS...



...BRANCHING PASSAGEWAYS
AND HIDDEN TRAPDOORS...



...GUARDED BY THE
MIGHTIEST DAEMONS...





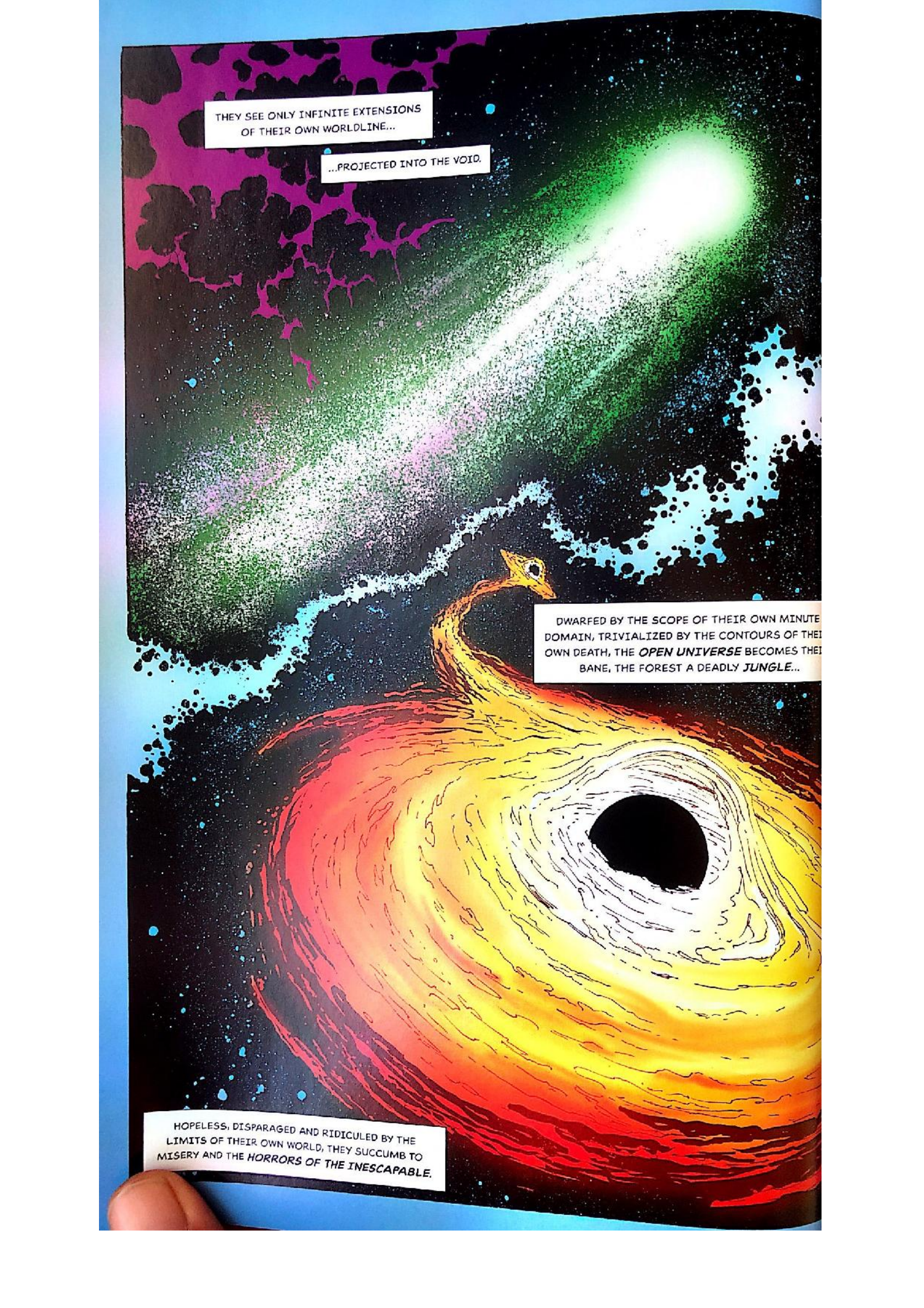
...PORTALS THROUGH WHICH ONLY A
TIME-SEASONED THINKING MAY PASS.

GAZING OUT INTO THE DARKNESS, FULL OF LIGHT, RAYS
RECEDING FASTER THAN THEY CAN BE OBSERVED,
ENDLESSLY STRAYING INTO THE BEYOND, THESE TRIBES
THINK THEY SEE PROOF OF THE CREMATION OF THE
UNIVERSE, ITS WORLDLINE'S DIVERGING INFINITELY.

...FOR IN A CLOSED WORLD
WOULD THE SKY NOT RADIATE
WITH CONVERGENT RAYS?

SUCH FALSE CREEDS MAKE
OF THEM CHIMERICAL
CHILDREN, BORN AT ONCE
OF DARKNESS,
OF BECOMING,
OF THE FLOW OF TIME,
AND OF OPENNESS.

WHEN THESE TRIBES SET SAIL ON THE RIVERS OF
THEIR NATURE, PASSING THROUGH THE RAVINES AT
THE EDGE OF THE UNIVERSE—ALL IN THE HOPE OF
MEETING LIKE-MINDED INTELLIGENCES—THEY
NEVER ENCOUNTER ANYTHING BUT THEMSELVES.



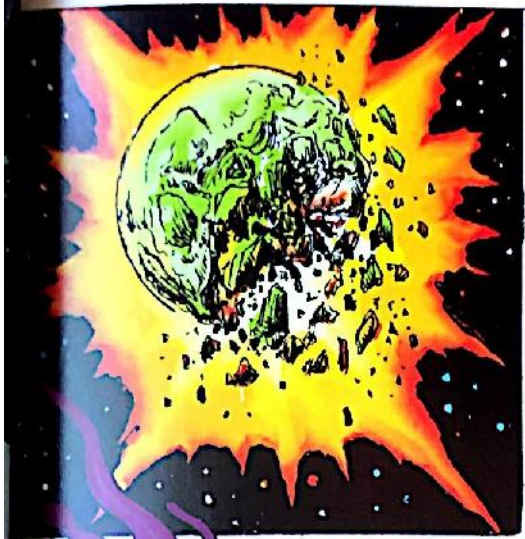
THEY SEE ONLY INFINITE EXTENSIONS
OF THEIR OWN WORLDLINE...

...PROJECTED INTO THE VOID.

DWARFED BY THE SCOPE OF THEIR OWN MINUTE
DOMAIN, TRIVIALIZED BY THE CONTOURS OF THEIR
OWN DEATH, THE *OPEN UNIVERSE* BECOMES THEIR
BANE, THE FOREST A DEADLY *JUNGLE*...

HOPELESS, DISPARAGED AND RIDICULED BY THE
LIMITS OF THEIR OWN WORLD, THEY SUCCUMB TO
MISERY AND THE *HORRORS OF THE INESCAPABLE*.

AND YET FOR EVERY TRIBE THAT LIVES IN A CLOSED WORLD, THERE ARE OTHERS FOR WHOM THE DIVERGENCE OF LIGHT--THE VERY **DARKNESS** INTO WHICH THEY GAZE--APPEARS AS AN INCOMING CONVERGENCE OF LIGHT FROM THE INFINITE OUTSIDE.



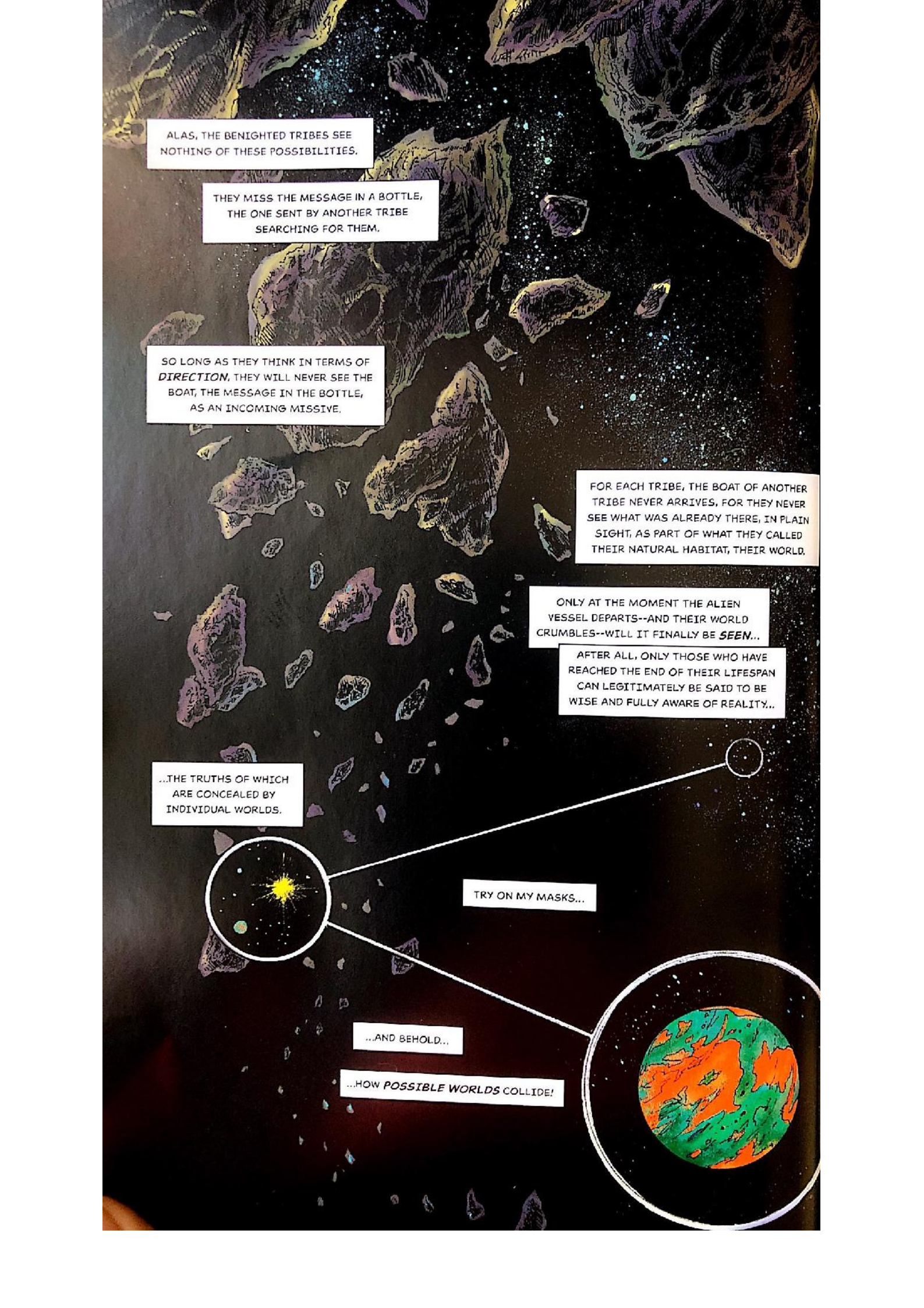
THOSE WHO ONLY SEE ONE OF MY **MASKS**, REMAIN **BLIND** TO THE OTHERS.



THOSE WHO SEE AND WEAR ALL OF MY **MASKS** SEE NOT ONLY THE **ALIEN INHABITANTS** OF OTHER WORLDS...



...BUT ALSO THOSE WORLDS THAT **COULD BE**.



ALAS, THE BENIGHTED TRIBES SEE
NOTHING OF THESE POSSIBILITIES.

THEY MISS THE MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE,
THE ONE SENT BY ANOTHER TRIBE
SEARCHING FOR THEM.

SO LONG AS THEY THINK IN TERMS OF
DIRECTION, THEY WILL NEVER SEE THE
BOAT, THE MESSAGE IN THE BOTTLE,
AS AN INCOMING MISSIVE.

FOR EACH TRIBE, THE BOAT OF ANOTHER
TRIBE NEVER ARRIVES, FOR THEY NEVER
SEE WHAT WAS ALREADY THERE, IN PLAIN
SIGHT, AS PART OF WHAT THEY CALLED
THEIR NATURAL HABITAT, THEIR WORLD.

ONLY AT THE MOMENT THE ALIEN
VESSEL DEPARTS--AND THEIR WORLD
CRUMBLES--WILL IT FINALLY BE *SEEN*...

AFTER ALL, ONLY THOSE WHO HAVE
REACHED THE END OF THEIR LIFESPAN
CAN LEGITIMATELY BE SAID TO BE
WISE AND FULLY AWARE OF REALITY...

...THE TRUTHS OF WHICH
ARE CONCEALED BY
INDIVIDUAL WORLDS.

TRY ON MY MASKS...

...AND BEHOLD...

...HOW *POSSIBLE WORLDS* COLLIDE!



3038 AG, CLUSTER BLUESHIFT 5, LACARS
PLANET, COSMODROME DIRECTORATE
COMPOUND, JOINT ACTIONS MEETING ROOM.

WHY HAVE
YOU CALLED US
HERE, **SECRETARY
LISKO?**

YOU SCIENTISTS
CHASE YOUR DUMB
ROCKS, WE'LL TAKE CARE
OF THE REAL ENEMIES.

YOU'RE
WASSSSSTING
MY TIME--THIS IS
NO MILITARY
MATTER!

CORRECT, GENERAL--
THIS IS NOT JUST A
POTENTIAL THREAT,
IT IS AN **EXISTENTIAL
CRISIS** FOR THE
LACAR ORDER.

WITH ALL DUE
RESPECT, WE ARE
CUSTODIANS OF THE
KNOWN UNIVERSE
NOT JUST BECAUSE
OF OUR MILITARY
MIGHT...

"...BUT ALSO BECAUSE WE ARE
**SCHOLARS, SURVEYORS,
FRONTIERSMEN OF
THIS UNIVERSE...**

"... OUR **NEUTRON STAR
ENERGY HARVESTING
PROGRAM** IS SECOND TO NONE!

"AND THANKS TO THE
PANOPTIC BELT,
NOTHING IN THIS
GALAXY CAN EVADE
OUR WATCHFUL EYES.

"YOU WILL AGREE, GENERAL, THAT IT IS **CRUCIAL** WE
MOVE TO PROTECT THE LACAR ORDER FROM ANY
POTENTIAL THREAT...NO MATTER HOW **CRYPTIC...**"

VERY WELL THEN,
TELL USSSSSSS WHAT
YOU KNOW OF THIS **THING,**
WITHOUT FURTHER DELAY!

ÖDLA, PLEASE GIVE THE
GENERAL YOUR EXECUTIVE
SUMMARY OF THE SITUATION
REGARDING **CH-SHDW.**



SIR, THE
ENTITY WE CALL
CHAMELEON SHADOW
CAME FROM OUTSIDE
OUR GALAXY.

THE ACCELERATION OF
THIS OBJECT IS QUITE
UNLIKE ANYTHING WE
HAVE SEEN BEFORE.

EVERYTHING ABOUT
ITS MOTION AND SPIN IS
UNNATURAL, AND...



COME NOW,
SSSSSSPIT IT OUT,
I HAVE AN OFFICIAL
FUNCTION TO
ATTEND!



SIR, WHEN IT
DRAWS CLOSE TO
ANY CELESTIAL BODY,
IT DECELERATES,
AS IF...

...AS IF
IT IS DELIBERATELY
INSPECTING
THEM



SOME COSMIC
PEBBLE IS BEHAVING
A LITTLE WHIMSICALLY?

IS THAT



EXCEPT
THAT, WHEN
IT...

...PAYS
THEM A
VISIT...

...THEY
CEASE TO
EXIST.

SSSSSTARS
DIE EVERY
DAY.

WHY ISSSS
THIS A PLANETARY
EMERGENCY?



SIR, THIS IS NO
NATURAL WASTAGE.
CH-SHOW GRANTS ITS
GETS ONLY TO SOME AND
NOT TO OTHERS--AS IF IT
IS A KIND OF *PROBE*
FROM OUTSIDE.



GETTER?



ACCORDING TO
OUR ANALYSES, *CH-SHDW*
HAS A PAYLOAD--A HOST
OF *VIRUS-FOSSILS* OF
UNKNOWN ORIGIN WHICH
INFECT EVERYTHING
IT TOUCHES.

"BEFORE WE LOST CONTACT WITH OUTPOST B17,
THEY MANAGED TO RECOVER A SAMPLE."

PALEOVIROLOGY ANALYSIS--

A collage of various fossil illustrations, including trilobites, graptolites, and other prehistoric organisms, set against a dark background with a grid pattern. The illustrations are rendered in a light, sketchy style, showing the intricate details of these ancient life forms. The trilobites are shown in various poses, some from the side and some from the top. The graptolites are depicted as branching, leaf-like structures. Other smaller fossils, possibly insect fossils or microfossils, are scattered throughout the collage. The overall composition is a dense arrangement of these prehistoric specimens, highlighting the diversity of life in the Paleozoic era.

"BEFORE WE LOST CONTACT WITH OUTPOST B17,
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PALEOVIROLOGY ANALYSIS--

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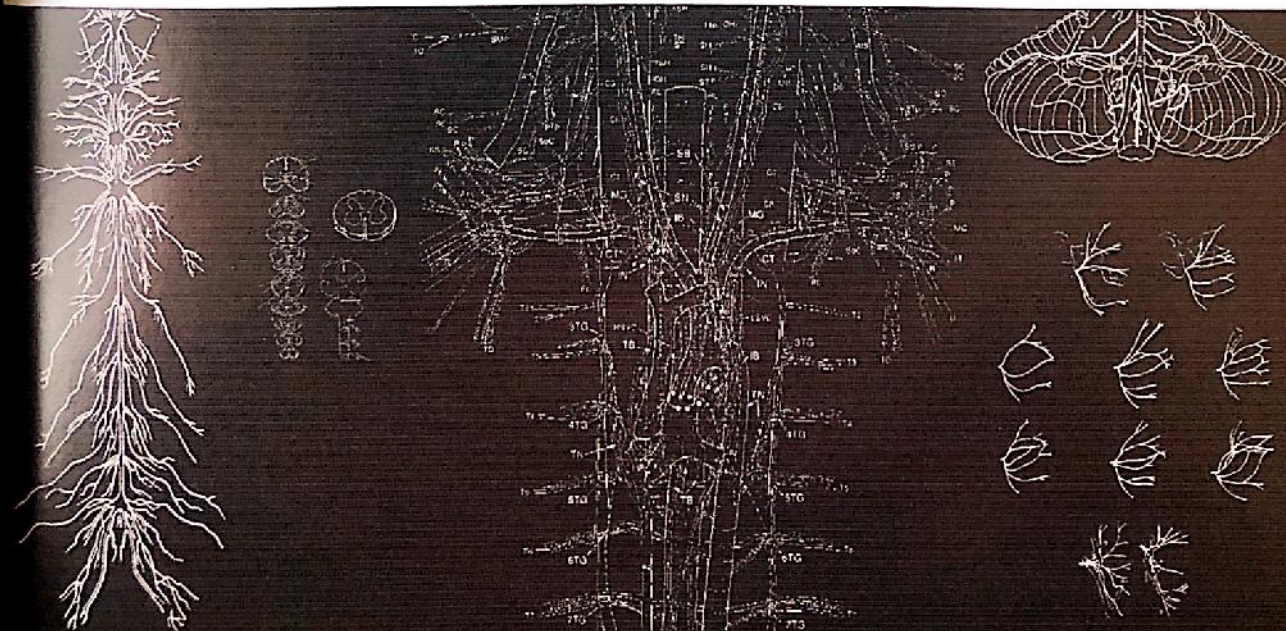
"BEFORE WE LOST CONTACT WITH OUTPOST B17,
THEY MANAGED TO RECOVER A SAMPLE."

PALEOVIROLOGY ANALYSIS--

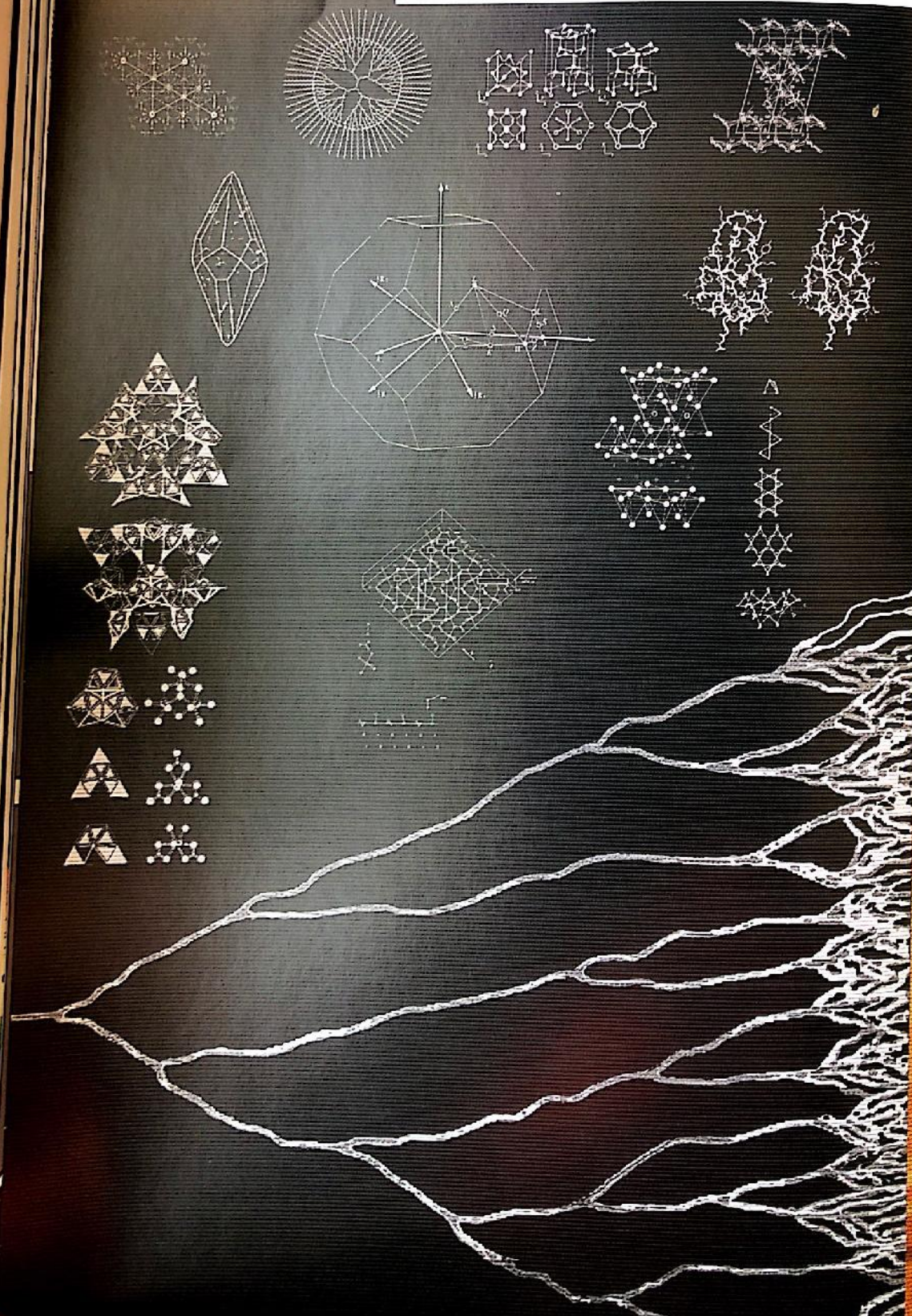
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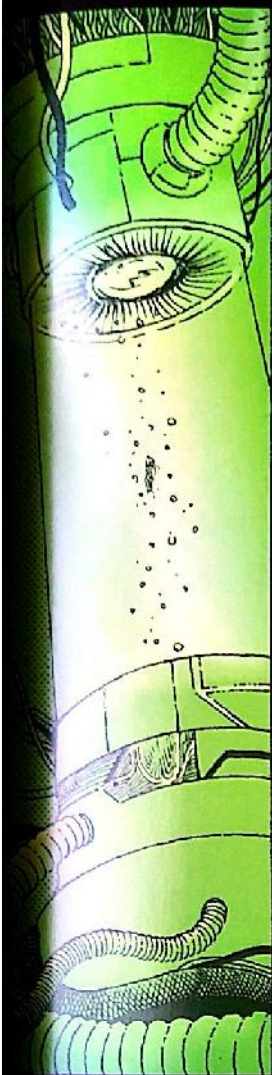
DAY 2: DNA PATTERN EXACTLY MATCHES OURS.

DAY 3: PHENOTYPE SIMULATION SHOWS SIMILARITIES TO LACAR RACE, BUT NO TAIL, NO SCALES, EXCESSIVE CEPHALIZATION, SPINAL EVOLUTION, HAIRLESS SKIN, EVOLVED POWER, PRECISION GRIP.



DAY 4: DNA PATTERN ANOMALOUS. HAL
DEEP-SEA SWIMMER. HALF LAND-TROTTER
FEEDS ON INORGANIC CARBON





THE WAYS OF TIME
ARE TWISTED AND
RAMIFIED...

THOSE WHO ARE UNABLE
TO NAVIGATE THROUGH
THE TERMINUS OF ALL
LIFE CAN BECOME LOST
IN A BACK ALLEY,
A DEAD END.

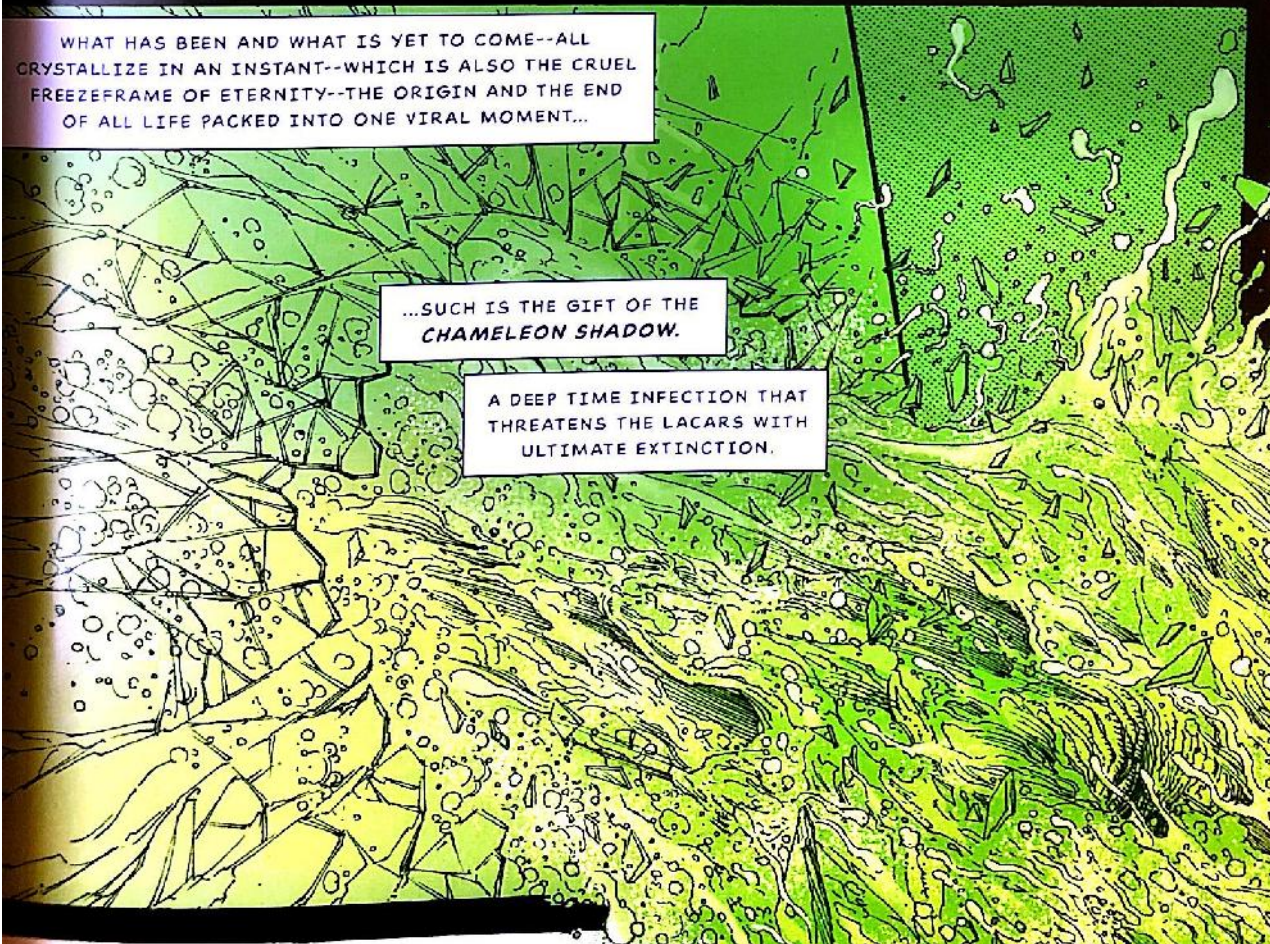
BUT THE
ASTROPHAGE IS
ALL IN ONE.



WHAT HAS BEEN AND WHAT IS YET TO COME--ALL
CRYSTALLIZE IN AN INSTANT--WHICH IS ALSO THE CRUEL
FREEZEFRAME OF ETERNITY--THE ORIGIN AND THE END
OF ALL LIFE PACKED INTO ONE VIRAL MOMENT...

...SUCH IS THE GIFT OF THE
CHAMELEON SHADOW.

A DEEP TIME INFECTION THAT
THREATENS THE LACARS WITH
ULTIMATE EXTINCTION.



SSSSSSSSO
HOW ABOUT WE GIVE
THIS INTERSTELLAR
DUNG A GOOD DOSE
OF **NUCLEAR
CHEMOTHERAPY?**

THE MORE WE
ATTACK IT, THE MORE
RESILIENT IT BECOMES,
IT BECOMES LARGER
AND MOVES FASTER.

BESIDES, GENERAL,
ANY RADIATION RISKS A FASTER
MUTATION, DO YOU WANT TO SEE ITS
EVOLUTION IN A SECOND, OR OVER A
THOUSAND YEARS, SO WE CAN AT
LEAST TELL THE STORY TO OUR
GRANDCHILDREN?

THEN
WHY AM I HERE,
SECRETARY ODLA?
WHAT DO YOU
SUGGEST?

THE ONLY
REMAINING
OPTION...

...**FULL
PLANETARY
EVACUATION.**

WE HAVE
A DESTINATION IN
MIND--A YOUNG PLANET,
LESS THAN FIVE BILLION
YEARS OLD.

HABITABLE?

ANY ADVANCED
ORGANISMS?

NOT THAT IT
MATTERSSSSSS.

WE
CAN DEAL
WITH THEM.

NOT EXACTLY
OPTIMAL, BUT
SERVICEABLE.

UNFORTUNATELY ITS
SKY IS BLUE, BUT THE
BIOSPHERE IS SIMILAR
ENOUGH TO OURS.

NO COMPLEX
LIFEFORMS, ONLY
UNICELLULAR
ORGANISMS AND
PLANKTON...

SECRETARY,
MY APOLOGIES, THE
LINK WITH SCOUT 5
IS NOW ONLINE.

GENERAL, WE HAVE
OUR TOP COSMONAUT
EN ROUTE TO STUDY
CH-SHDW FROM A
SAFE DISTANCE.

THE LAST
SIGHTING OF THE OBJECT
WAS SIXTY THOUSAND
MILES FROM THE PLANET
RCTR-1L

GO AHEAD, COMMS..."

GROUNDLESS
CONTROL SPEAKING,
DO YOU READ ME?

LOUD
AND CLEAR,
COSMODROME!

DEPARTING
ORBIT--ALL IS
QUIET HERE.

PLEASE REPORT
ON RECENT ACTIVITY
OF THE INTERSTELLAR
OBJECT.

NOTHING TO
REPORT.

COURSE IS
SET FOR RCTR-IL
AND LONG-RANGE SENSORS
DETECT THAT THE OBJECT IS
INACTIVE--BUT THAT
PLANET GIVES ME
THE CREEPS.

STILL
SCARED OF THE
MONAZZEINS?

YOU
SHOULD HAVE
GROWN OUT OF
IT BY NOW,
SCOUT!

ANYHOW, THEY
HAVE BETTER
THINGS TO DO THAN
LACAR-WATCHING.

BUT NO
ONE KNOWS WHO
WILL BE THE NEXT
VICTIMS OF THEIR
TIME-CONTROL
EXPERIMENTS!

3038 AG. CLUSTER BLUESHIFT 5, RCTR-IL.

"NURSERY TALES SCOUT!

"THE ISLE OF RECTORS IS RULED
BY THE MONAZZEIN TIME-CULT.

"IT IS SAID THEIR TECHNOLOGY IS SO ADVANCED, THEY CAN
TRAVEL TO AN ALTERNATE WORLD--NOT A DIFFERENT
UNIVERSE, BUT THEIR WORLD FIVE MINUTES INTO THE PAST.

"THEY CAN MANIPULATE AND ERASE ALL
MEMORIES AND EVENTS OF THE PAST FIVE MINUTES.

"WHEN THEY RETURN, NO ONE--NOT
EVEN THEMSELVES--KNOWS
WHETHER OR NOT THE UNIVERSE
EXISTED FIVE MINUTES AGO.

"THE MONAZZEINS ALWAYS
COME IN TWOS, TO ENSURE THE
CONTINUATION OF THE ETERNAL.

"THEIR ENDLESS RECURRENCE MEANS THAT
THEY HAVE NO USE FOR THE CONCEPTS
OF LIFE OR DEATH."

IS EVERYTHING
READY FOR
DEPARTURE?

INDEED,
THE NEW CYCLE
HAS BEGUN.

WE NEED ONLY
ACTIVATE THE
ARBITER AND THE
TRIAL WILL
COMMENCE.

WE SHALL
SEE HOW OUR
SPECIMENS FARE
THIS TIME.

THESE
TRIBES, I PITY
THEM...

...I
HOPE THIS
TIME IT MAY BE
DIFFERENT.

WHAT ARE
HOPE OR PITY
TO US?

SUCH ARTICLES
OF FAITH ARE FOR
THOSE WHO
SUFFER TIME.

ONLY WHEN OLD
WORLDS ARE EFFACED
WILL THOSE WHO THINK
THEMSELVES GODS
OF THIS UNIVERSE
BE HUMBLER.

ONLY THEN WILL THEY
SEE THE MANY POSSIBILITIES
TO WHICH THEY HAVE BEEN BLIND--WE
OPEN THE WAY, THAT THEY MAY
DISCOVER THE TWISTED WAYS
OF AKARANA.

NOW YOU MUST
PREPARE FOR OUR
RETURN.

ENOUGH!

DEEP WITHIN THE SUBTERRANEAN TEMPLEX OF THE MONAZZEINS, THE EAGER YOUNG ACOLYTE FOLLOWS THEIR ELDER INTO THE **HALL OF PROGENITORS**.



SO WE ARE FINALLY TO RETURN?

AM I TO SEE IT, THE **ULTIMATE MACHINE**?

YOU HAVE SEEN IT ALREADY.

BUT...

YOUR ASSUMPTIONS BETRAY YOUR NAIVETY, MY YOUNG FRIEND.

IT IS YET TOO EARLY FOR YOU.

SURELY, MY TRAINING IS COMPLETE--BUT I WILL GRADUATE SOON ENOUGH.



THIS IS NOT A MILITARY SCHOOL.



THERE ARE NO RANKS HERE.

WE HAVE NO TRUCK WITH THE VAGARIES OF PERSONHOOD AND QUALIFICATION.



YOU ARE AS MUCH MY SENIOR AS I AM YOUR PROGENITOR.



THIS IS THE VERY MEANING OF THE **RETURN**.

IT WAS ALWAYS THUS FOR THE MONAZZEINS--THE **ECLOSION ARBITER** IS THE GUARANTOR OF OUR **ETERNITY**.

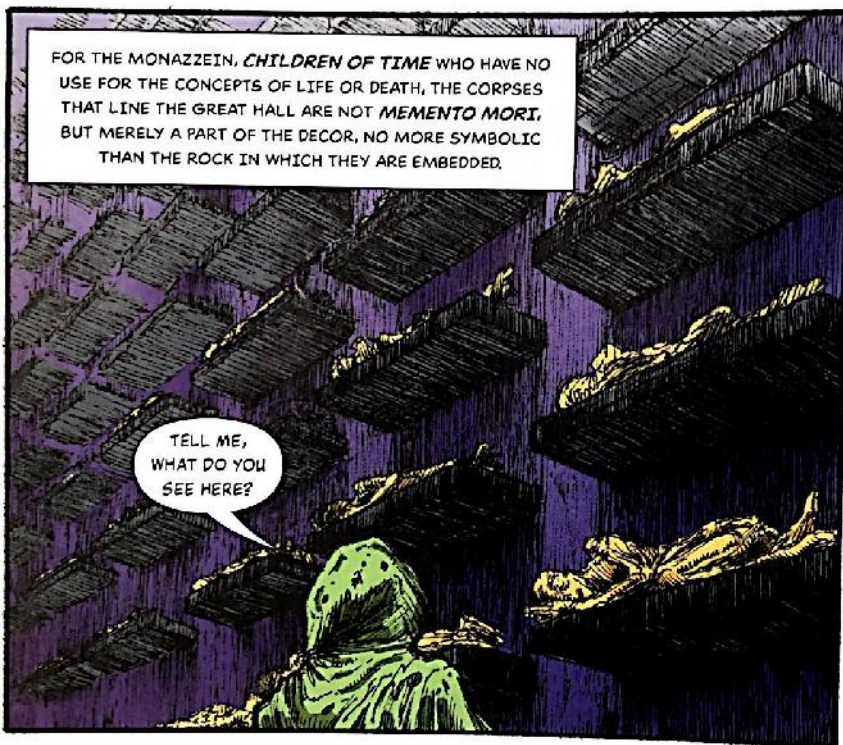
IT ENSURES THE MISSION WILL CONTINUE UNTIL THOSE **TIME-SEQUENCES** INTELLIGIBLE TO THE TRIBES HAVE BEEN **UNBOUND**.



"AS THE BOOK SAYS--

"--IN TWO, WE BECOME A LOOP.

"IN ETERNITY WE CANCEL
OUR LIFE AND DEATH."



FOR THE MONAZZEIN, *CHILDREN OF TIME* WHO HAVE NO USE FOR THE CONCEPTS OF LIFE OR DEATH, THE CORPSES THAT LINE THE GREAT HALL ARE NOT *MEMENTO MORI*, BUT MERELY A PART OF THE DECOR, NO MORE SYMBOLIC THAN THE ROCK IN WHICH THEY ARE EMBEDDED.

TELL ME,
WHAT DO YOU
SEE HERE?



WHAT
IS THERE TO
SEE?

JUST ANOTHER
ADORNMENT.

AS
THE BOOK
TELLS US--



--THE TEMPLE
IN WHICH WE DWELL
IS BUILT ON THE
HUSKS OF THOSE
WHO WILL HAVE
RETURNED.

YES,
BUT THIS ONE IS
DIFFERENT...

DOES
IT NOT LOOK
UNCANNILY...

...LIKE
YOU?

I DON'T...



COME, YOU
KNOW WHAT MUST
HAVE BECOME
OF YOU.

FEAR DOES
NOT BEFIT A
MONAZZEIN.

HOW MANY
TIMES HAVE YOU
BEEN *EFFACED*?

HOW COULD I
POSSIBLY KNOW,
WHEN *NOTHING*
REMAINS?

EVEN IF THEY EXIST,
THE MEMORIES ARE
SOMEONE ELSE'S--
OR NO ONE'S.

THEN, IN
RETURNING,
WE LOSE
OURSELVES...

IN THAT,
THERE IS NOTHING
TO GRIEVE.

COULD THE
PROCEDURE NOT BE
USED INSTEAD TO
SELECT...

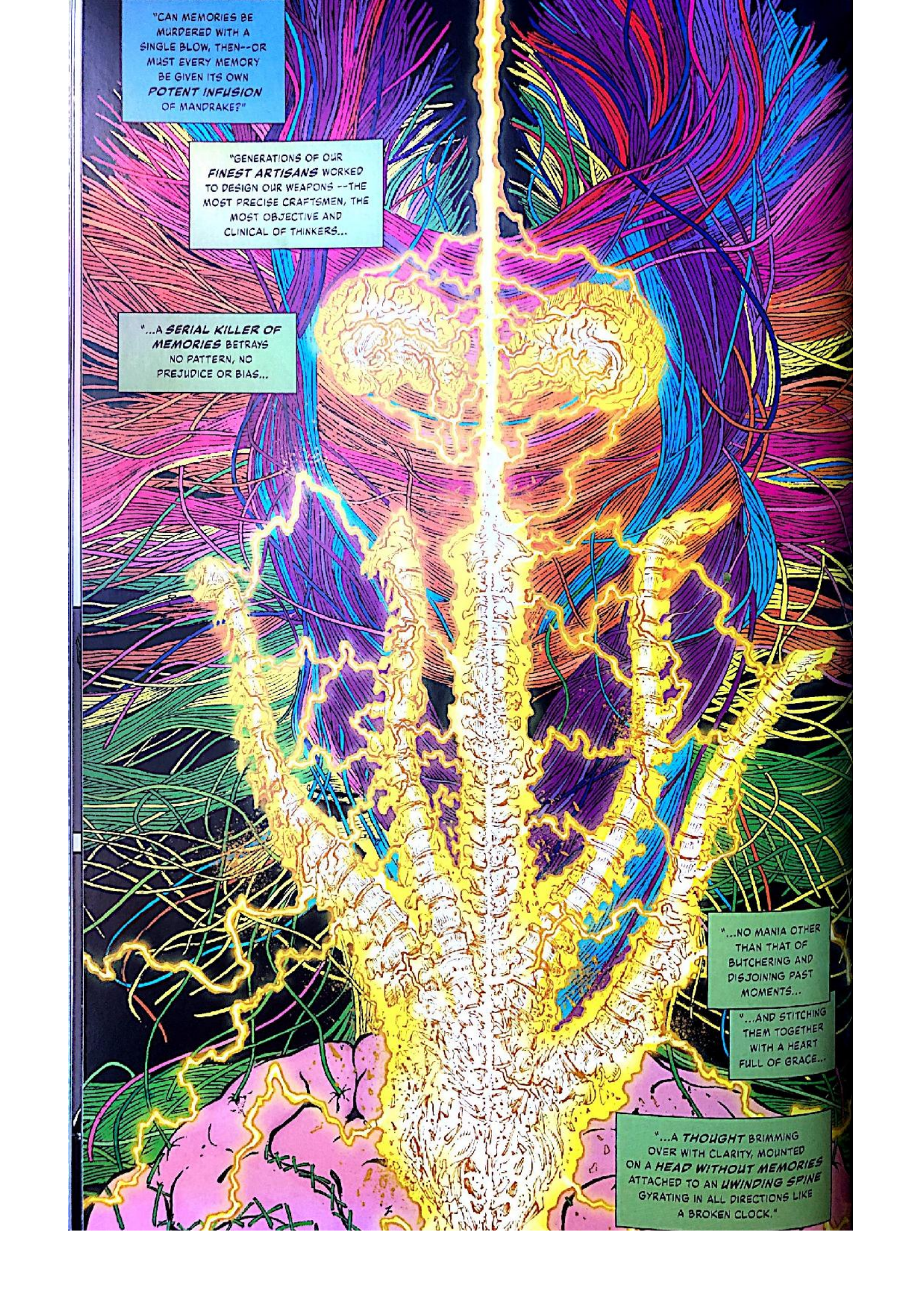
...TO COLLECT THE
BEST MEMORIES--A
CIVILIZATION'S MOST GLORIOUS
MOMENT, AN INSTANT FROM THE
BLISSFUL DAYS WHEN THE UNIVERSE
COULD NOT EVEN RECOGNIZE
ITSELF...

...PRESSED
AND PRESERVED
LIKE PETALS OF
THE FINEST
FLOWER...?...

...OR THE
WORST...?

THERE ARE
NO GOOD OR BAD
MEMORIES...

...ALL ARE
STIFLING.



"CAN MEMORIES BE
MURDERED WITH A
SINGLE BLOW, THEN--OR
MUST EVERY MEMORY
BE GIVEN ITS OWN
POTENT INFUSION
OF MANDRAKE?"

"GENERATIONS OF OUR
FINEST ARTISANS WORKED
TO DESIGN OUR WEAPONS --THE
MOST PRECISE CRAFTSMEN, THE
MOST OBJECTIVE AND
CLINICAL OF THINKERS...

"...A **SERIAL KILLER OF
MEMORIES** BETRAYS
NO PATTERN, NO
PREJUDICE OR BIAS...

"...NO MANIA OTHER
THAN THAT OF
BUTCHERING AND
DISJOINING PAST
MOMENTS...

"...AND STITCHING
THEM TOGETHER
WITH A HEART
FULL OF GRACE...

"...A **THOUGHT** BRIMMING
OVER WITH CLARITY, MOUNTED
ON A **HEAD WITHOUT MEMORIES**
ATTACHED TO AN **UNWINDING SPINE**
GYRATING IN ALL DIRECTIONS LIKE
A BROKEN CLOCK."



IT IS
A BLISSFUL
THING TO SIT
ATOP THE CORPSES
OF YOUR PAST, RATHER
THAN CARRYING THEIR
DEAD WEIGHT.

BLESSED
ARE THOSE WHO
DO NOT LIVE *IN TIME*, BUT
LIVE AS IF THEY *WERE TIME*,
LIKE A TIDE PROGRESSIVELY
WASHING THE SCENE OF
CARNAGE FROM THE SHORES
OF LIFE.

EVERY
ONE OF MY
MEMORIES...

...VOIDED...

YOU
MISUNDERSTAND.

SINCE THEY
DO NOT TRULY
BELONG TO US, NO
MEMORY CAN EVER BE
TRULY EXCISED AND
DISPOSED OF.

THEIR
ORIGINS ARE REAL
CAUSES.

UNSHAKABLE,
UNERASABLE...

...BUT WHEN MEMORIES
OF *YOUTH AND OLD AGE*
ARE FUSED, WHEN I CAN NO
LONGER INFER MY PRESENT
FROM MY PAST, WHEN
SELF-SCHEMATA
CANCEL ONE ANOTHER OUT,
THEN I AM EFFECTIVELY FREED
OF THEIR BURDEN...

...LIKE A
SHUT DOOR
WHOSE KEY
I HAVE LOST.

THE
DOOR STILL EXISTS,
AS DOES THAT WHICH
LIES BEYOND IT.

IN THE
RETURN I NO
LONGER RECALL MY
YOUTH, AND I AM NO
LONGER OLD.

WHEN
WE NO LONGER
FEARFULLY ANTICIPATE
OUR DEMISE, WE BECOME
PERPETUAL.

COME...



MEANWHILE, LACAR SCOUT 5
CONTINUES HIS RECONNAISSANCE
OF THE OBJECT KNOWN AS CH-SHDW.

THESE
MONAZZEINS
MUST BE THE HAPPIEST
OF ALL PEOPLES, FREED
FROM LIVING IN TIME...

ENOUGH!

THOSE CRAZY
CULTISTS ARE NO
ALLIES OF THE
LACARS.

WHAT MORE
DO YOU HAVE
TO REPORT,
SCOUT?

THE --BZZZZT--
OF THE SHADOW OBJECT
HAS BEEN CHANGING, FROM
--BZZZZZZZZZZZZT--
BUT WE BELIEVE
--BZZZZZZZZZZT--

--NOT
THEORETICALLY
POSSIBLE...



COSMODROME,
DO YOU COPY?

I HAVE
DRIVE FAILURE--
ALL SYSTEMS BUT LIFE
SUPPORT ARE
DOWN...

...I'M
DRIFTING.

COSMODROME?...



SCOUT 5,
DO YOU READ?
PLEASE REPEAT,
WE'RE LOSING
YOU!

BUT SCOUT 5 HAS
ALREADY BEEN ENGULFED
BY THE FOREIGN OBJECT, LIKE
A WORLD IN UNTIMELY
ECLIPSE, ABSORBED BY
THE SHADOW IT CASTS.



...A LIFELESS ROCK WITH PALPATING
ANTENNAE, AN ANCIENT IMPOSTOR POSING
AS A GUEST IN THE *BAL MASQUE* OF
LIFE, SCOUT 5 SUCCEUMS TO DELIRIUM.



SEIZED BY THE
ENTITY FROM OUT OF
THIS WORLD...

I WONDER...

...THE MONAZZEINS...



...HOW DID THEY...



...WHAT KIND OF VISITATION...



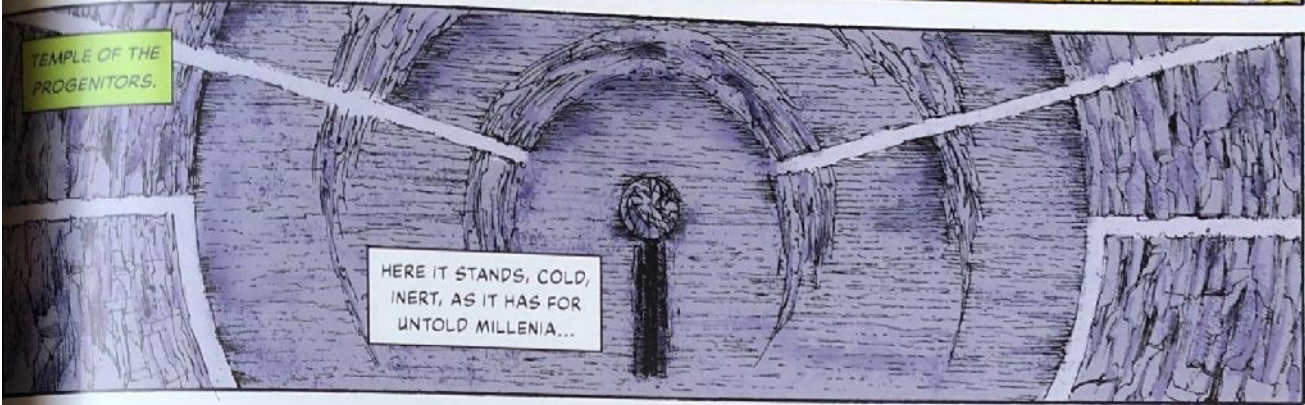
...COULD AFFORD ACCESS...



...TOOO SSSUUUUUCH
FEEEEEARLESSSSSS
FREEEEDOMMMMM?...



312 AG. RCTR-IL, CLUSTER
BLUESHIFT 5, ISLE OF RECTORS.



TEMPLE OF THE
PROGENITORS.

HERE IT STANDS, COLD,
INERT, AS IT HAS FOR
UNTOLD MILLENNIA...



FULL OF CARVEN TRIBUTES TO THE GREAT
DEITIES THAT ONCE PRESIDED OVER
A PROUD AND VIGOROUS PEOPLE...

OBJECTS OF THEIR GREATEST FEAR AND
VENERATION, WHOM THE ANCIENT STONWORK
CONTINUES TO HONOR EVEN AS THEIR
TWILIGHT SWIFTLY APPROACHES...

...FOR THOSE ALL-POWERFUL BEINGS
WHO NEVER SHOWED THEMSELVES...



...WHOSE RITES WERE
PERFORMED YEAR
UPON YEAR...

...BUT WHO HAVE NOT
DEIGNED TO SAVE THIS THIS
NOW *AILING TRIBE*...

...ARE ABOUT TO BE
BANISHED FOR GOOD!

THERE COMES AN
UNTIMELY INTRUDER...

...ONE THAT BREAKS ANY
GATE AND DEVASTATES ALL
FALSE GODS
AND **PRETENDERS!**



THE GODS
WILL FROWN UPON
US IF OUR FUTURE IS NOT
INFORMED BY OUR PAST,
IF OUR PAST DIVERGES
FROM THE *NATURE OF
THINGS*.

THEY
SURELY WILL...
NATURE IS ALL THAT
WE HAVE.

THERE IS
NOTHING OUTSIDE
OF IT, AND NOTHING
CAN BE ADDED
TO IT...

ALAS, WE
HAVE ANGERED
THE *GREAT
ONES*.

WE ALLOWED
OURSELVES TO
BECOME
*CHIMERICAL
BEASTS*.

WE MISTOOK
OURSELVES FOR
EXCEPTIONS, WHEN WE
ARE BUT *SPORTS
OF NATURE*.

"CHIMERAS ARE *BASTARDS*
BEGOTTEN BY THE ILLUSION
THAT WE CAN SIDESTEP THE
*KINGDOM OF THE
GREAT GODS*."

"TRULY,

"SUCH IS OUR
PUNISHMENT--

"--WE STAND AT THE
BRINK OF EXTINCTION.

"WE HAVE
NO TIME.

"WE NEVER
HAD TIME.

"WE MUST
RETURN TO WHAT IS
MOST NATURAL.

OUR
GREAT HOPES,
OUR INGENUOUS DEVICES,
OUR *TRANSGRESSIONS
AGAINST NATURE*...

...WITH
THIS ARROGANCE
WE *BETRAYED* OUR
WORLD.

INDEED,
THERE IS NO
'WE', THERE IS NO
UNIFIED WILL, NO
VOICE IN WHICH WE
COULD SPEAK...

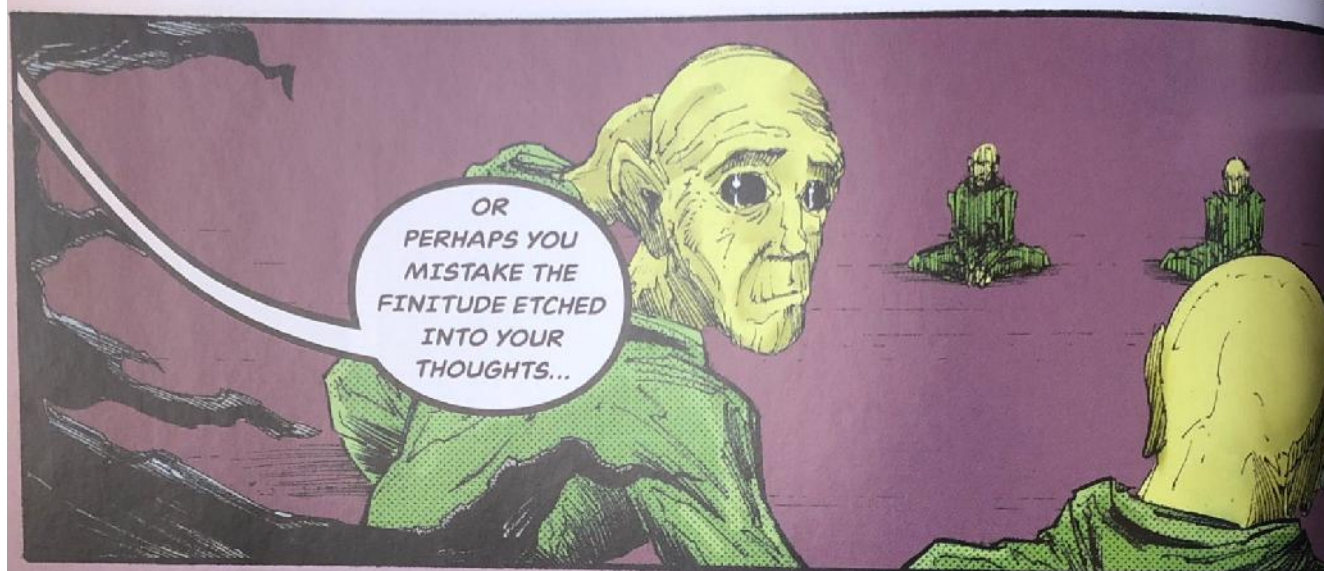
"...ONLY FRAGMENTARY
FORCES OF NATURE IN
ETERNAL COMPETITION--

"--A MAP THAT GUIDES THE *MANY*
TO THE *INEVITABLE*, THAT
WHICH WILL AT LAST UNITE US.

WISE
EDICTS
INDEED.

BUT I
AM CERTAIN
THESE WORDS AND
EFFORTS WILL BE
TO NO AVAIL.

REMEMBER
MY MONAZZEIN
FELLOW, OUR GOAL
IS NOT TO SUCCEED IN
OVERREACHING OURSELVES,
BUT TO FAIL ASTONISHINGLY
AND WITH GRACE.





WHAT
I AM MATTERS
ONLY TO THOSE WHO
MERELY LIVE THROUGH
ME RATHER THAN
LIVING AS ME.

OUT OF
CONVENTION, YOU
MAY CALL ME TIME,
AKARANA, A VORTEX
WITHIN WHICH ZERO AND
THE INFINITE CHURN
OUT THE INTELLIGENCE
WHOSE INDEFINITE
FORM I INTIMATE.

IMPOSTER!
EVEN IF YOU ARE
WHAT YOU CLAIM
TO BE, WHY SHOULD WE
TRUST YOU?

TO TRUST
IN TIME IS
FOLLY, THE VERY
SOURCE OF
YOUR PITIFUL
PLIGHT.

TO THINK
AS TIME IS
YOUR ONLY POSSIBLE
DELIVERANCE.

BUT IT
IS THE INEVITABLE
THAT IS PRESSING FOR
US, NOT THE SHALLOW
PROMISES OF A
TIME BEYOND
OUR BOUNDS.

WE HAVE
RENOUNCED SUCH
PRESUMPTION, AND
SEEK TO LIVE BY
NATURE AND NATURE
ALONE.

FOOLS! FOR
YEARS YOU HAVE
TAKEN REFUGE FROM
THE INEVITABLE--DEATH
AND THE LAWS OF THE
WORLD YOU HAVE MADE.
AND NOW YOU TAKE
REFUGE IN THE
SOURCES OF
YOUR HORROR.

WHAT IF I TOLD
YOU THAT WE ESCAPE
NOT FROM WHAT IS
INEVITABLE BUT FROM
WHAT GIVES US THE
ILLUSION OF
INEVITABILITY?



"THINK AS ME, FOR
INTELLIGENCE IS TIME."

"THE GODS WON'T
LOOK KINDLY UPON US!"

"BANISH YOUR GODS, BY
BUILDING POSSIBLE UNIVERSES."

"LIVE NOT IN ONE
WORLD, BUT INSTEAD MAKE
UNIVERSES FROM WHOSE VANTAGE
YOU MAY SEE YOUR WORLD AS
NO MORE THAN A CLUMP OF
MERE DIRT AND WATER."

"WE CAN'T AFFORD..."

"PEEL OFF YOUR
HIDE AND SEE ME..."

"...FOR WHAT
YOU ARE AS ME."

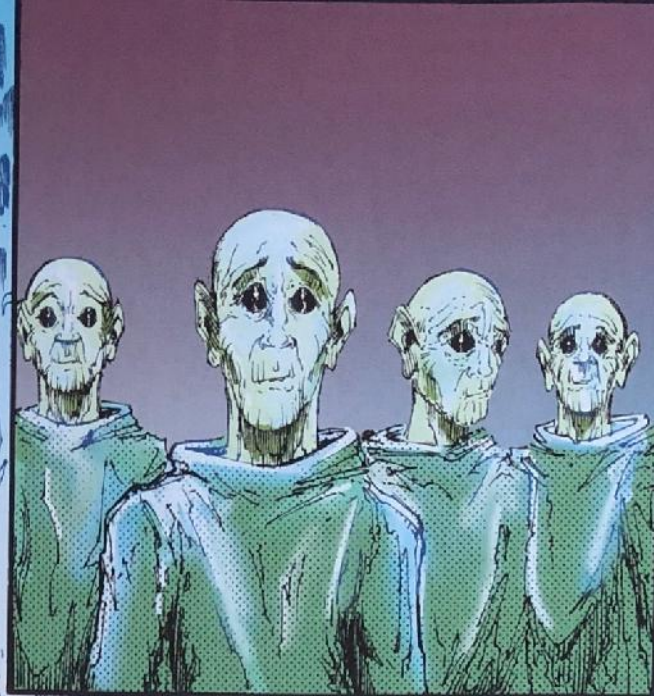


THE
WEAPONS...

...THE
THOUGHTS...
...IN...



...THIS
FIGHT...



...AGAINST
YOUR GODS...



THE **LAST MONAZZEINS** STAND TRANSFIXED AS THE CLOAKED FIGURE UNVEILS TO THEM VISTAS BEYOND THEIR LIMITED AND CRAMPED IMAGINATIONS, NOTIONS AND DEVICES THE LIKE OF WHICH THEY FORMERLY DARED NOT DREAM...

...THEY GAZE DUMBFOUNDED AT THE GREAT DOME OF
THE TEMPLE, NOW REVEALED FOR WHAT IT HAD
ALWAYS BEEN, UNBEKNOWNST TO THEM...



The illustration depicts a large, circular dome structure, possibly a city or a celestial body, rendered in a highly stylized, almost psychedelic manner. The dome's surface is covered in intricate, glowing patterns that resemble circuit boards or ancient carvings. A brilliant, yellow-white light source is positioned in the center, radiating outwards in jagged, electric-like beams. The colors are predominantly purple, blue, green, and yellow, with a central burst of white and yellow. The overall effect is one of intense energy and transformation.

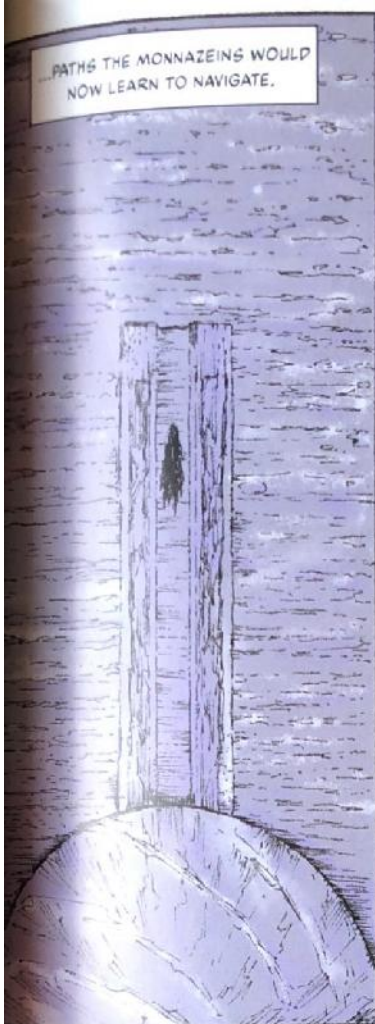
THE ANCIENT BAS-RELIEFS, IMAGES
MADE IN CRAVEN TRIBUTE TO THEIR DEITIES,
BEGIN TO **TRANSFORM** BEFORE THEIR EYES.

AS THE PRIESTS' FLEETING VISITOR GESTURES
UPWARD, THE DOME BEGINS TO RADIATE LIKE A
CHIAROSCURO, AN EDIFICE RAISED UP AND
EMANATED FORTH BY AN ETERNAL BLACKNESS.

ILLUMINATED LIKE A MACHINE
WITH THOUSANDS OF THE MOST
INTRICATE CIRCUITS...

...EACH AN OBLIQUE
PATH TO THE STARS...

...PATHS THE MONNAZEINS WOULD
NOW LEARN TO NAVIGATE.



REBUILDING THEIR
ORDER ANEW.



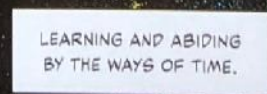
DEFEATING ALL LIMITATIONS
OF THEIR FORMER WORLD
AND ITS NATURE



DEVELOPING EVER MORE SOPHISTICATED
CONCEPTIONS AND DEVICES...



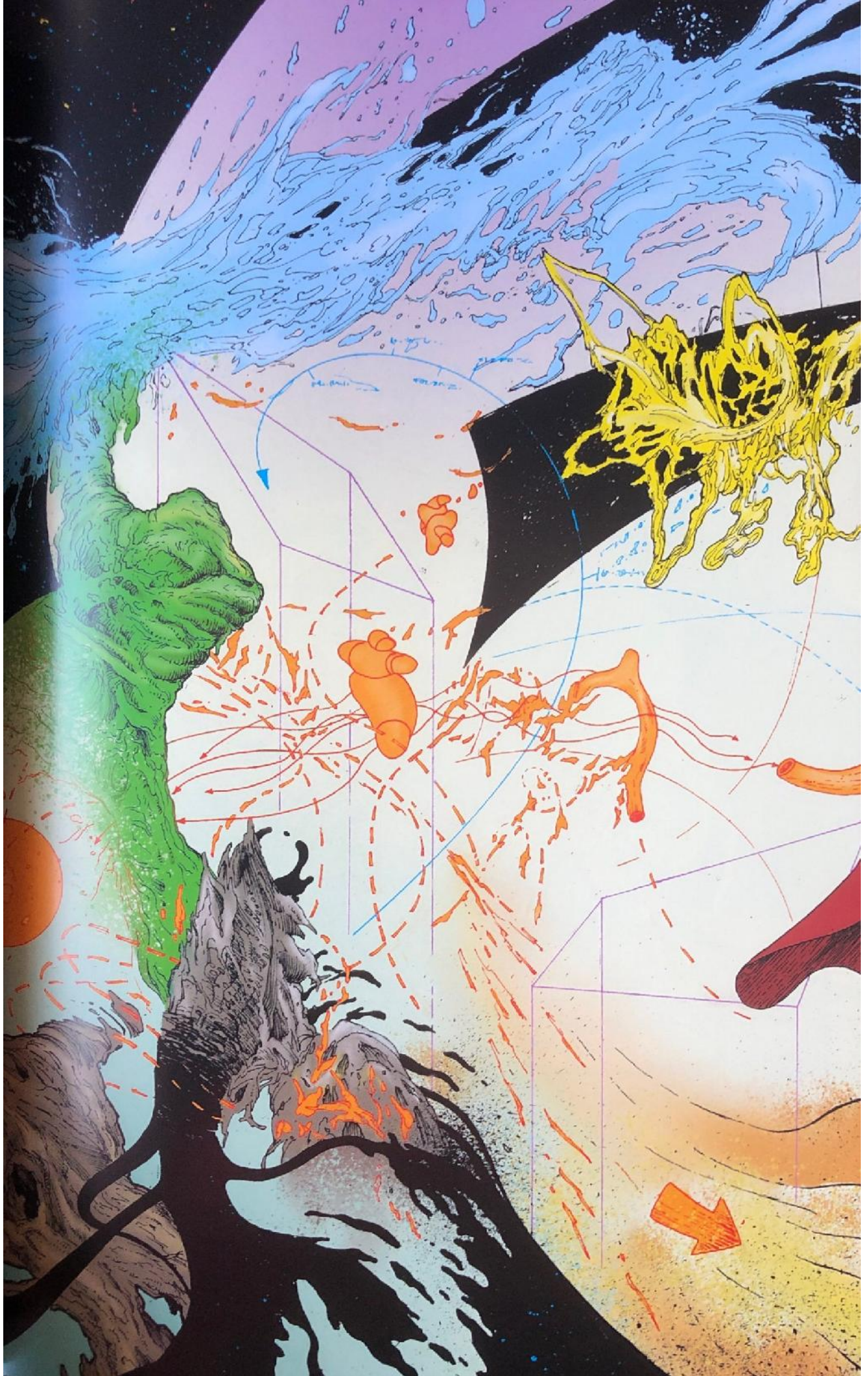
LEARNING AND ABIDING
BY THE WAYS OF TIME.

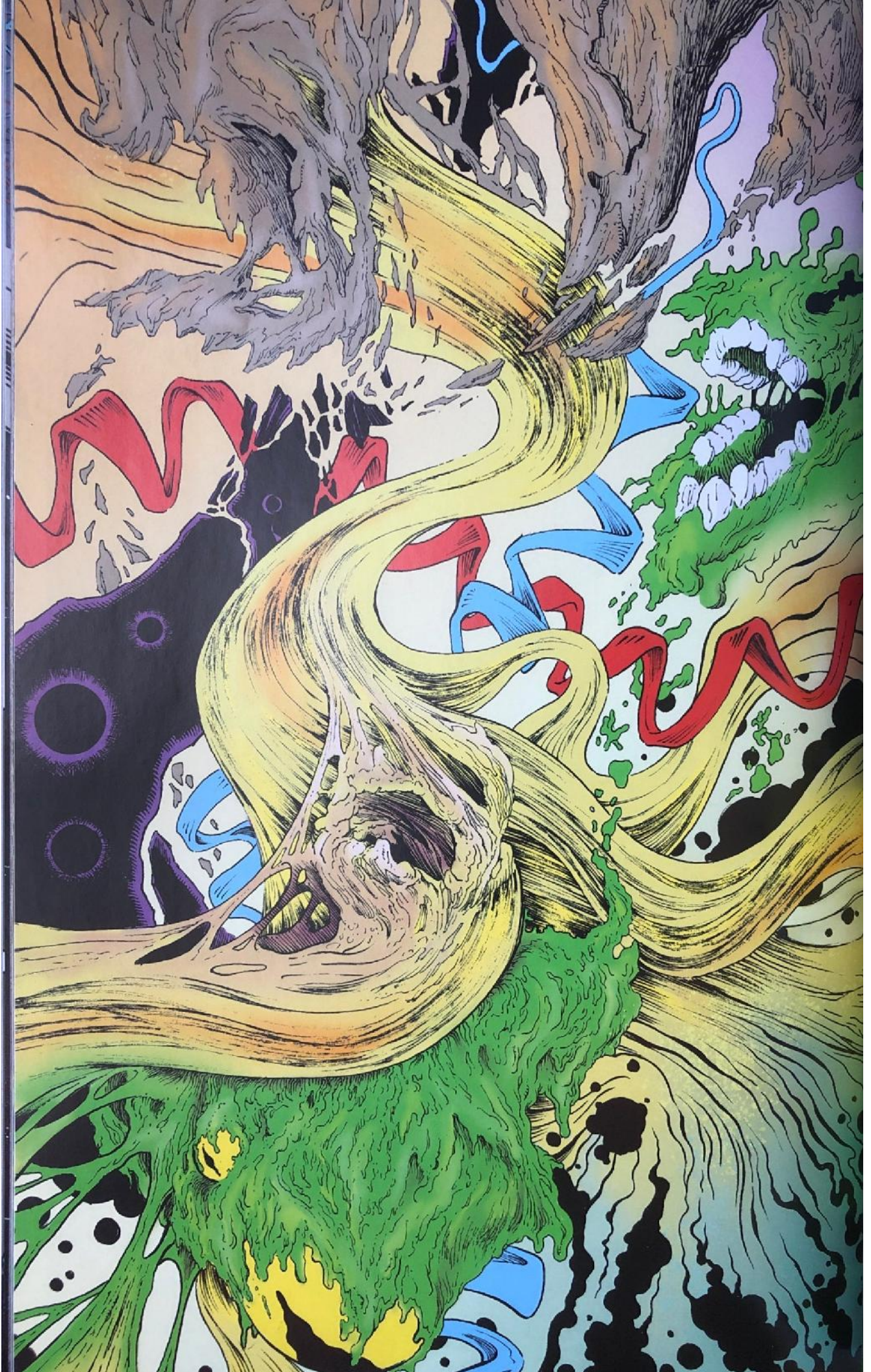










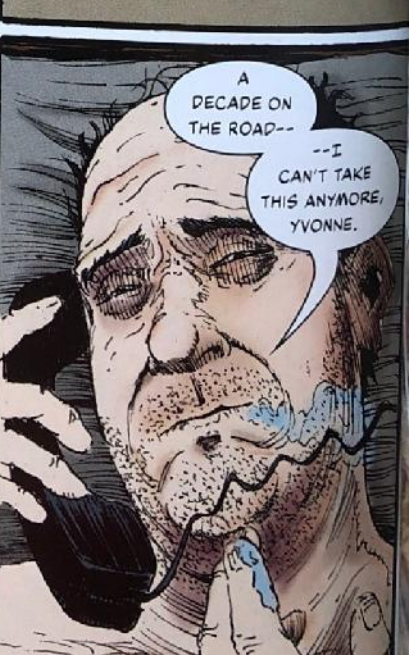
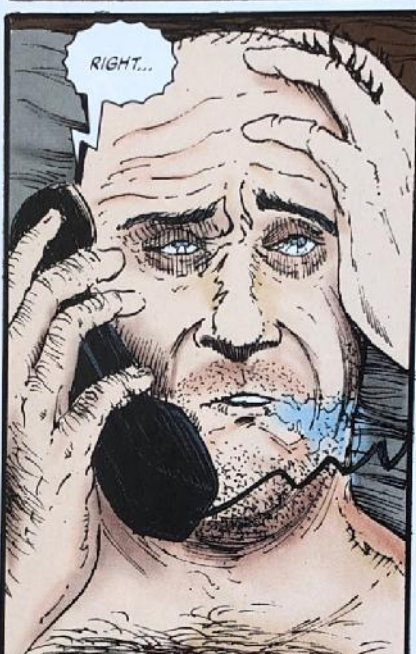
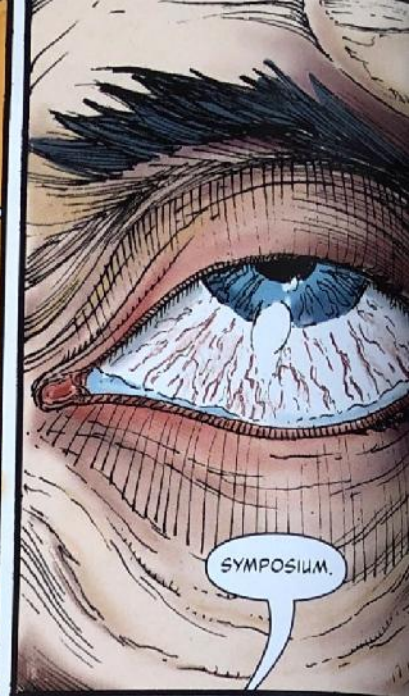


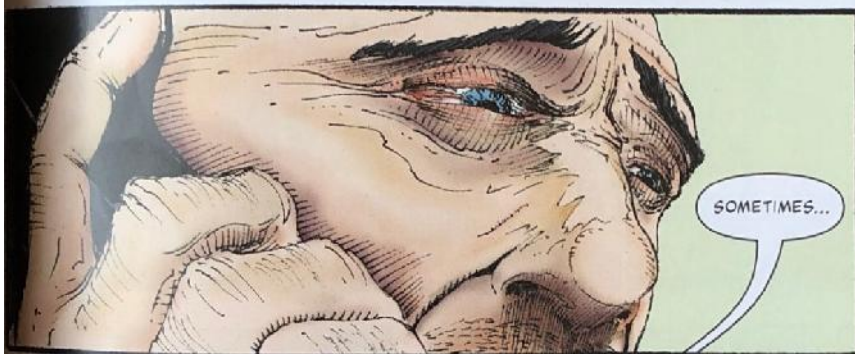
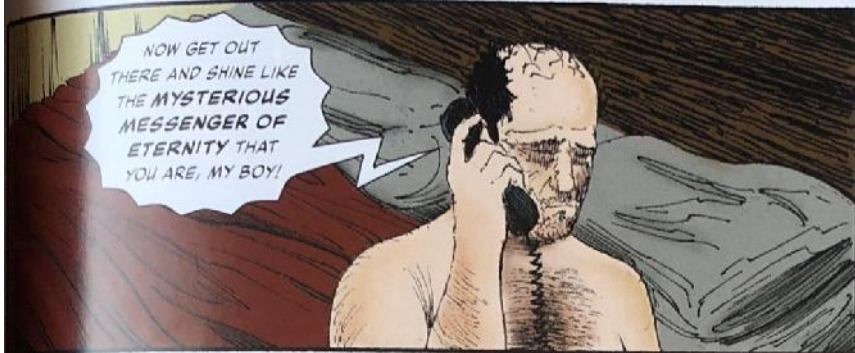












THE #1
BESTSELLER
IT WILL
CHANGE
OUR
WORLD



THE
TERRIFYING
TRUTH



ANOTHER NIGHT, ANOTHER
STADIUM FULL OF THE STENCH
OF DESPERATION...



SHELL OUT A MONTH'S SALARY TO HEAR
SOME BULLSHIT FAIRY TALES IN STEREO?



BE MY GUEST.

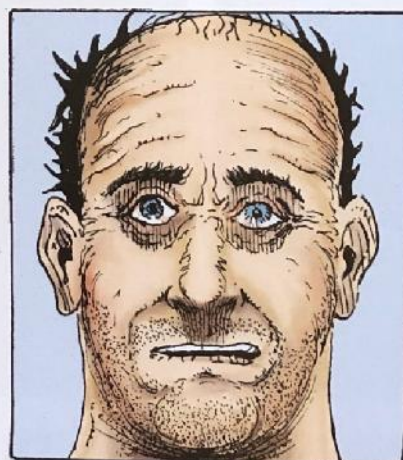
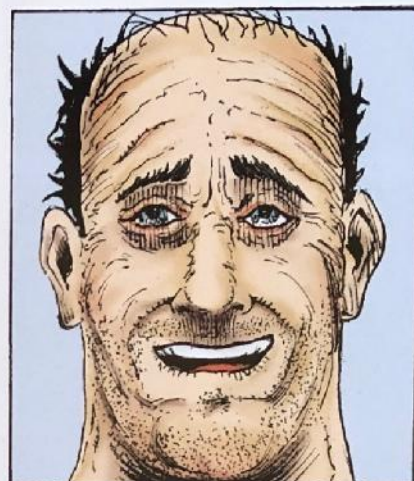
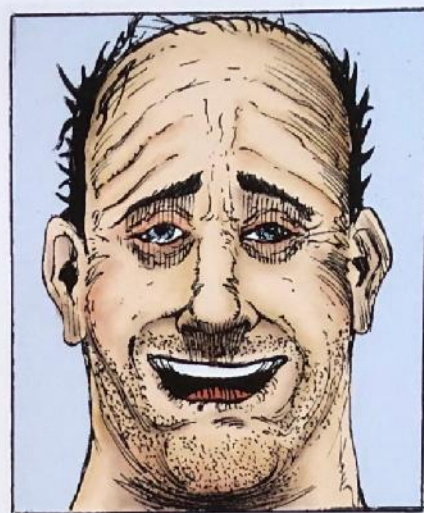
THE TERRIFYING
TRUTH IS...



ONE DAY, IT'S COMING TO GET ME TOO.

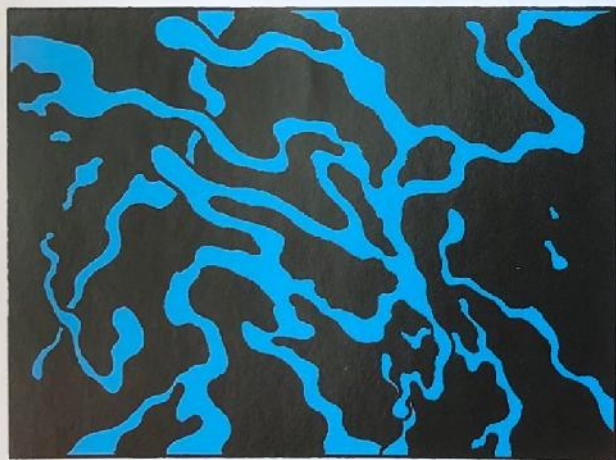


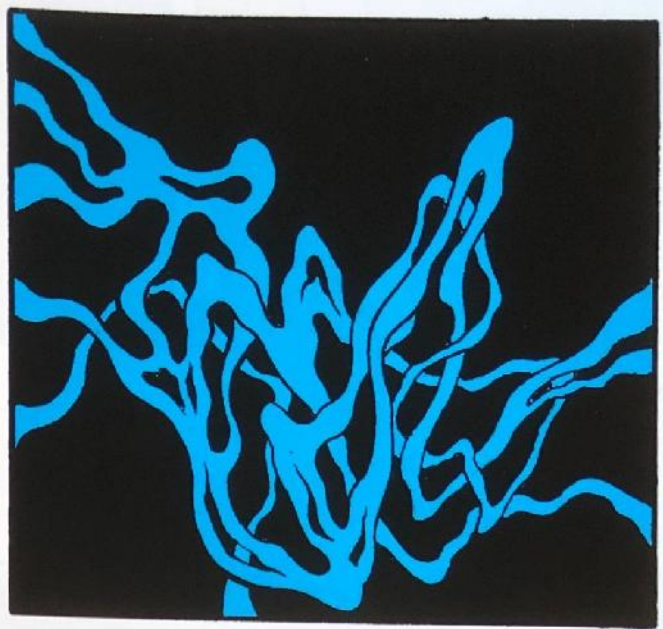
WISH ME LUCK, MA...













...AND YES,
THEY WANT YOU TO
REMAIN INSIDE THAT
BUBBLE, MY FRIENDS,
DEEP INSIDE THAT
ILLUSION...

AS IF THE
WHOLE MIRACLE OF
LIFE ON EARTH JUST
HAPPENED, JUST EVOLVED
FROM NOTHING, WITH NO
OUTSIDE INTERVENTION,
RIGHT?...

...YOU AND ME,
TONIGHT, WE'VE FACED
UP TO WHAT THEY FIND
UNTHINKABLE...

...WE HAVE
SEEN BEHIND
THE **MASK**.

THE
TRUTH THAT
MANKIND'S
AMNESIA HAS
BURIED...

'REALITY' BUBBLE
• Earth is a stable system
• We are alone in the cosmos
• Memory is individual
• Time only flows one way
• Human is a fixed species
TIME TO WAKE UP!?!

NO TIME
LIKE THE PRESENT

...THAT WE ARE NOT ALONE, THAT
OUR WORLD IS NOT THE **ONLY ONE**...

...AND WHEN
WE FACE THAT
TRUTH, MY FRIENDS,
WHEN WE...

...BECOME
THAT TRUTH...

...WE TRANSFORM EVERYTHING
WE KNOW ABOUT THIS PLANET,
ABOUT OURSELVES...

...AND ABOUT
OUR RELATION
TO **TIME**.

THANK
YOU LADIES AND
GENTLEMEN.

**"WAKE UP TO THE PAST,
AWAKEN THE FUTURE. RECLAIM
YOUR INDEPENDENCE. WE WILL NO
LONGER BE THEIR **SLAVES**."**

...CRAZY
BUT HE MAKES
IT SOUND SO
PLAUSIBLE.

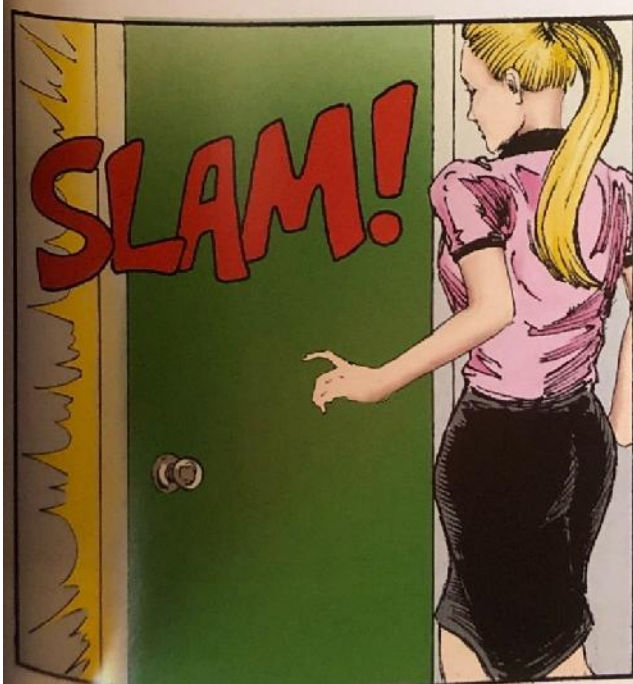
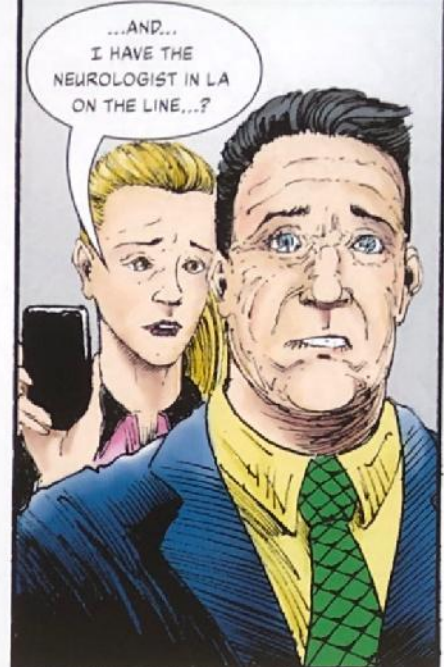
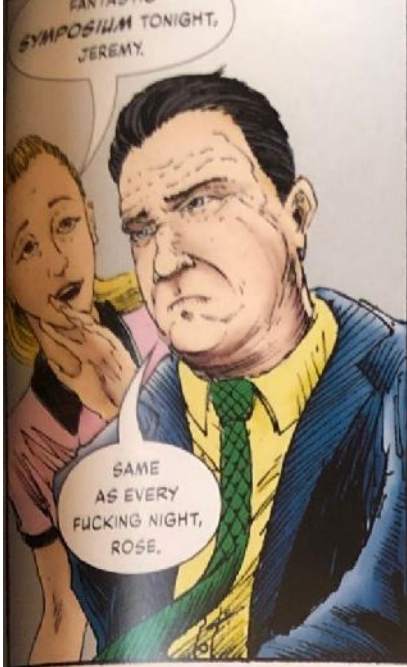
...SUCH
CHARISMA...

...AND, LIKE, IT
TOTALLY CHANGES
EVERYTHING...

...PEOPLE
NEED TO
KNOW...

...GONNA
BUY A COPY
FOR UNCLE
PETE TOO...

CLAP CLAP CLAP CLAP CLAP CLAP CLAP CLAP



3038 AG, CLUSTER BLUESHIFT 5, RCTR-IL.

THE VESTIBULE
IS THE SITE OF
REGENERATION
AND **CONTINUITY**.

STEADY
YOURSELF. SOON
WE MUST
RETURN.

ONCE THE ARBITER
IS ACTIVATED, THE VIADUCTS
IMMEDIATELY OPEN.

THE EFFECTS
ARE ALREADY
BEGINNING TO
BE FELT...

"...EVEN HERE ON
OUR OWN PLANET."

"THEN WE HAVE
FULFILLED OUR DUTY."

"HOW NEEDLESSLY THE **TRIBES**
SUFFER...IT IS EASY FOR AN **OLD MAN**
TO DIE. BUT TO THE YOUNG WARRING
CHILDREN OF TIME, THE DEATH
OF AN OLD MAN TODAY IS AN OMEN
ABOUT TOMORROW.

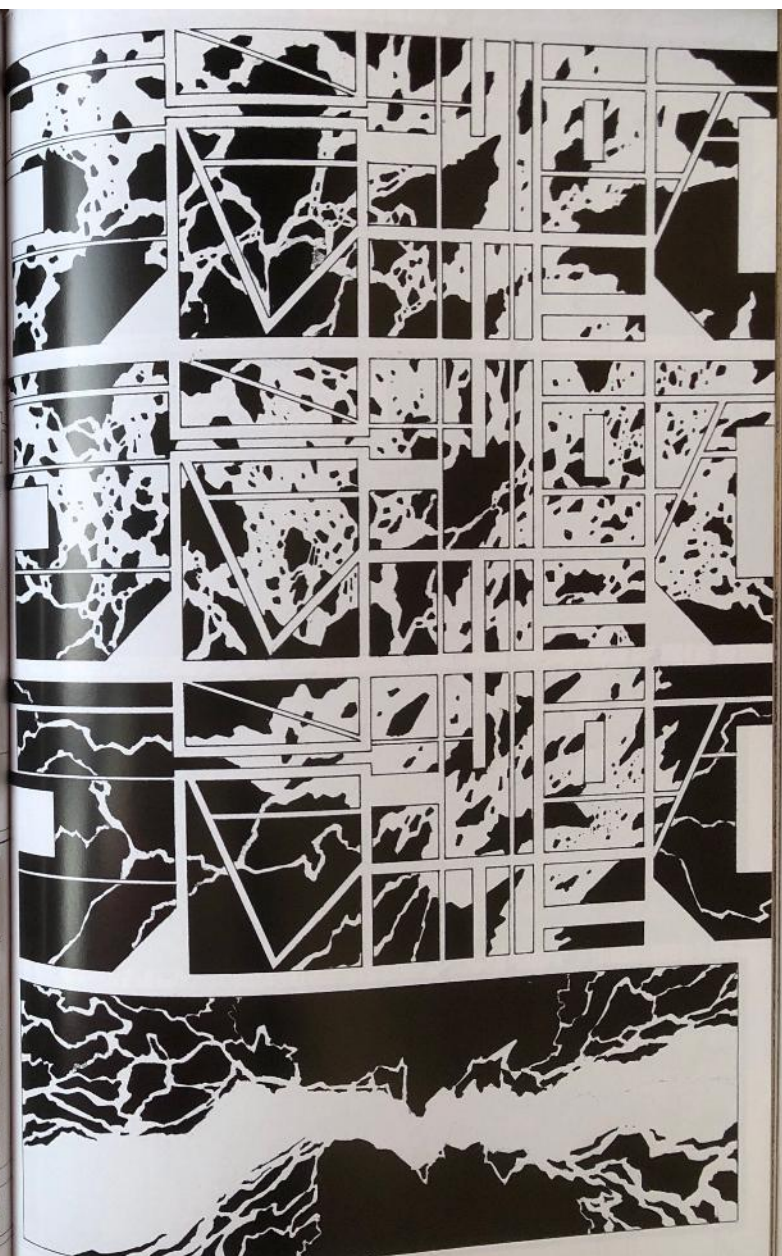
"IT IS HARD FOR THESE TRIBES
NOT TO FALL INTO PURE **MAYHEM**
AND **CONFUSION** WHEN THEIR
DAY OF RECKONING COMES."

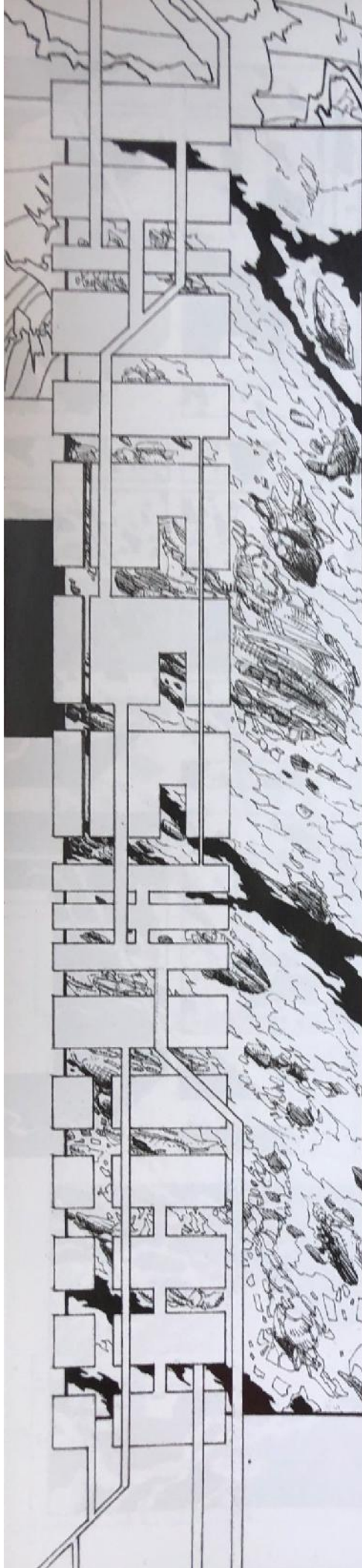
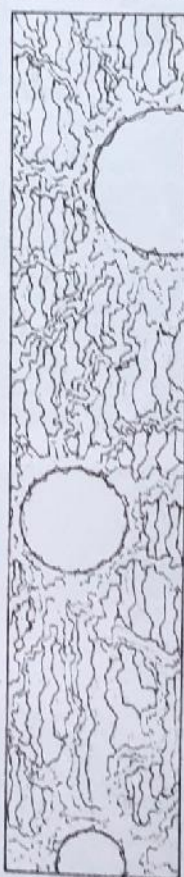
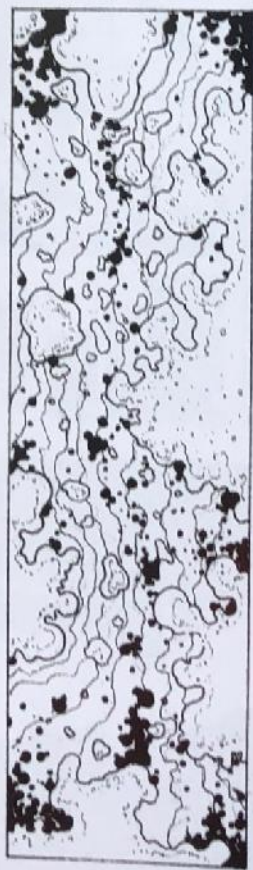
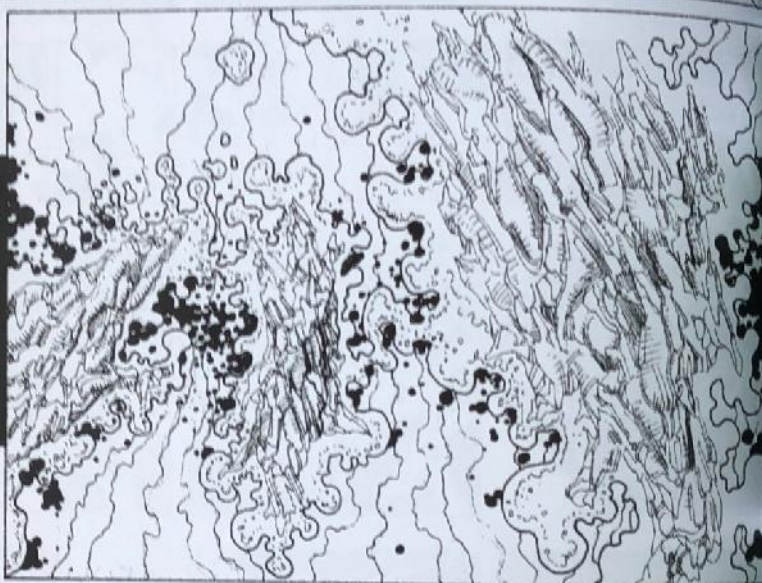
AS THE **DECLOSION ABRADER** IS ACTIVATED, TIME PEELS OFF
ITS MASKS, AND THE DENIZENS OF MANY WORLDS ARE AFFORDED
ACCESS TO THE MULTITUDES THAT LIE BENEATH...

...SUDDENLY VIOLENTLY COINCIDING WITH THE
FACES OF OTHER CIVILIZATIONS, OTHER
WORLDS, UNSUSPECTED GALAXIES...

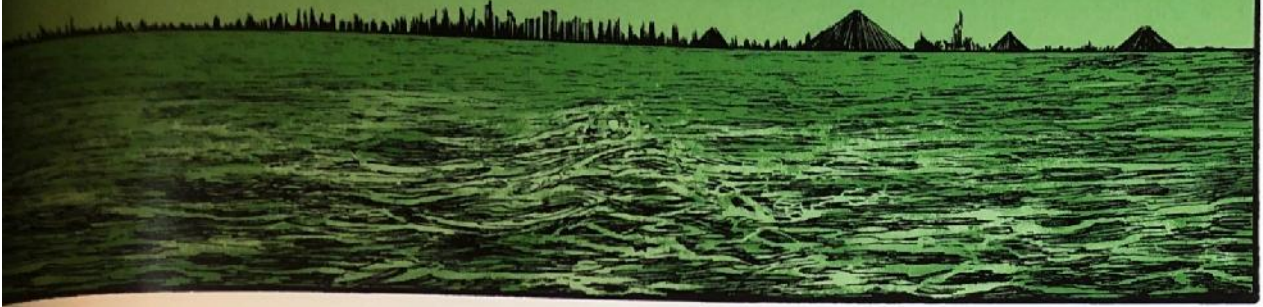
...ALL INERT FOSSILS LIKE HALF-HEALED
SCARS ADORNING THE FACE OF TIME.



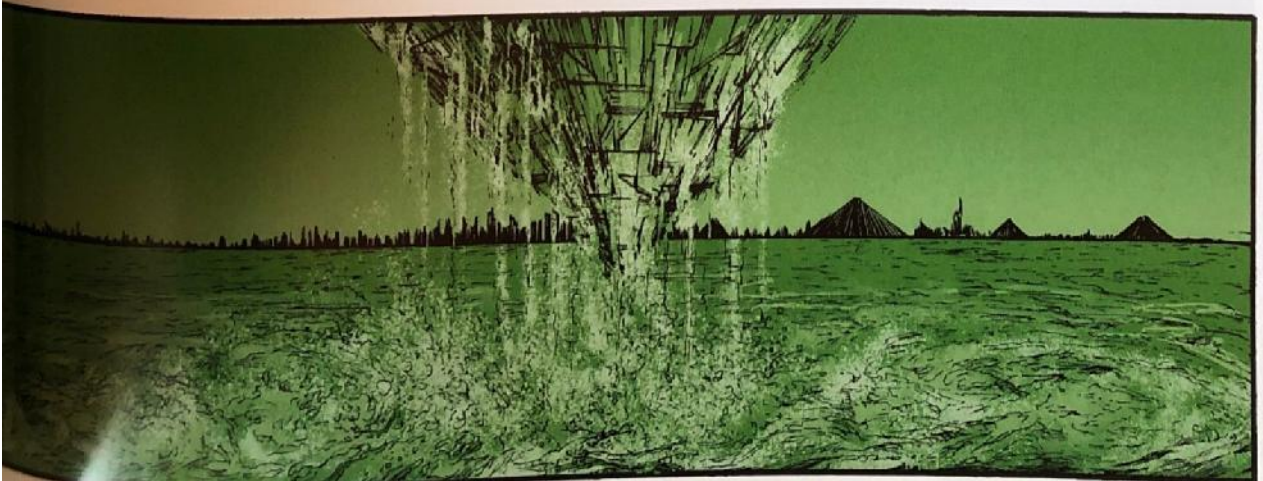


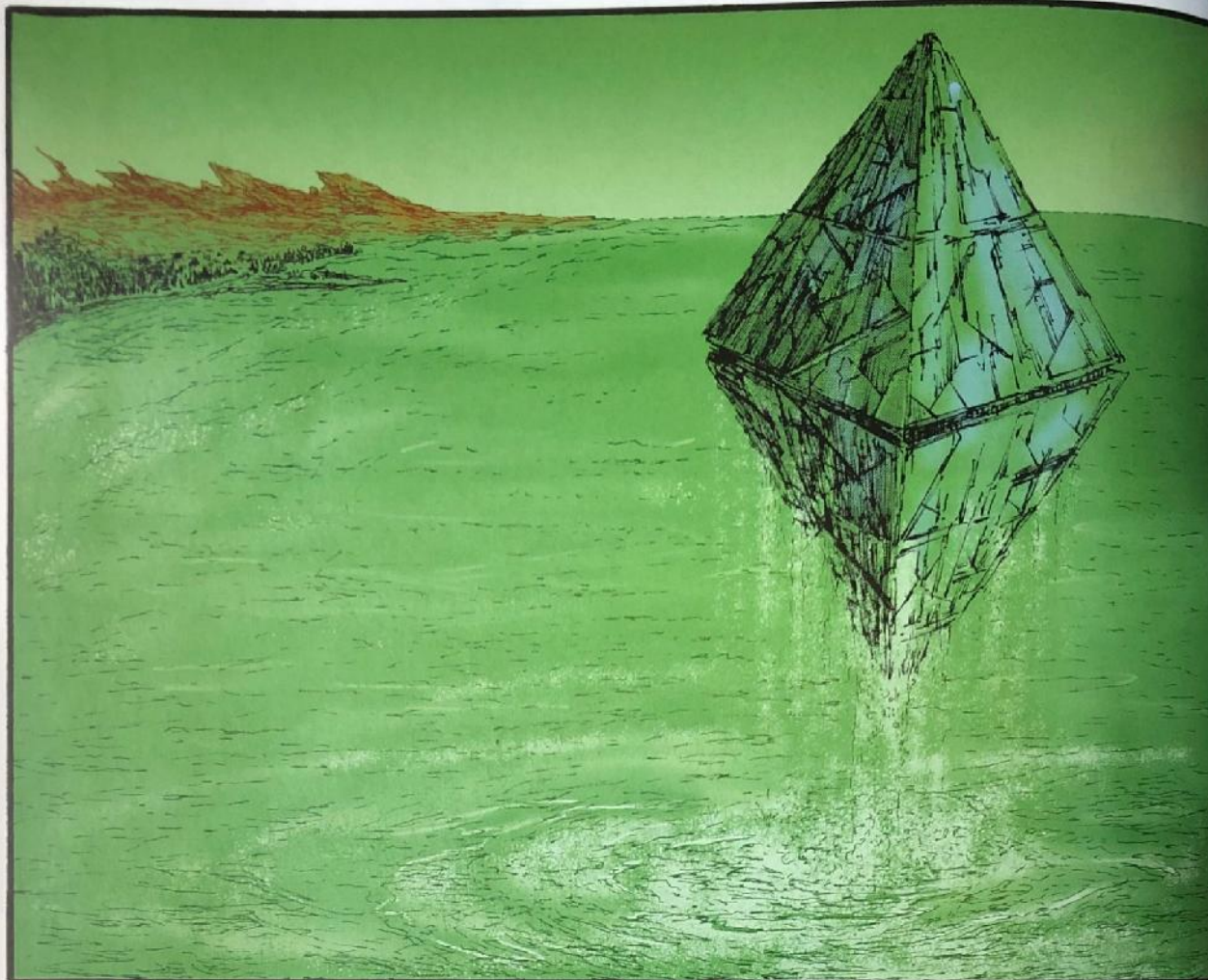


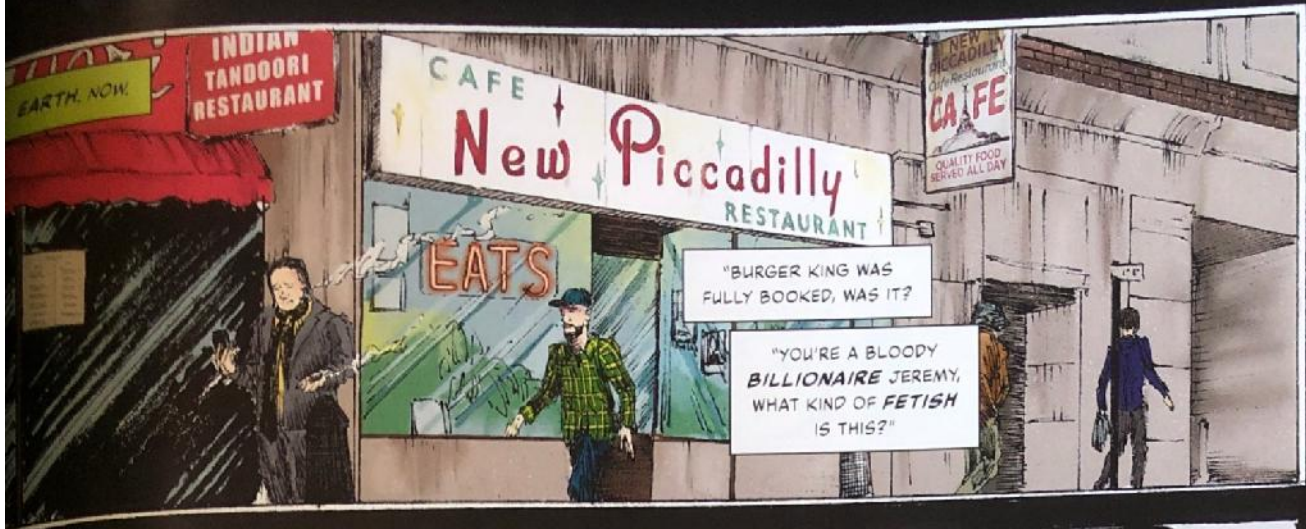
BOSS AG, CLUSTER BLUESHIFT 5, LACARS PLANET.

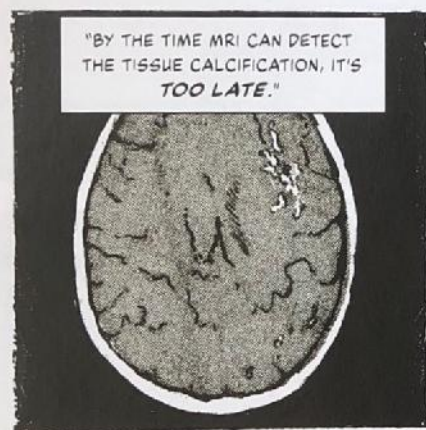
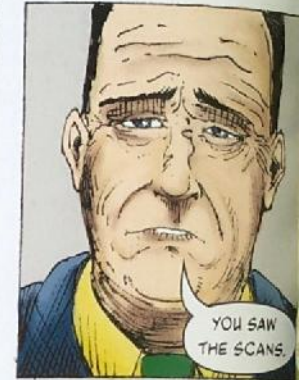
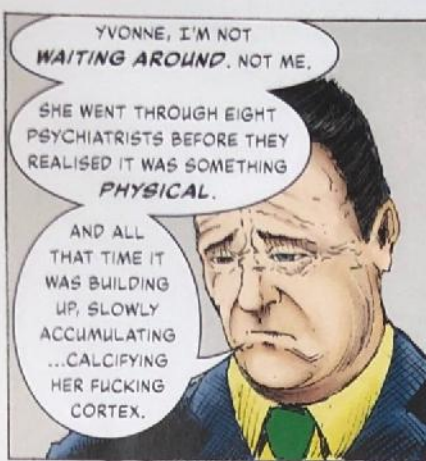


AS THE *TIME-VIRUS* ENVELOPS THEIR ILLUSTRIOUS CITIES, AND THEIR HIGHLY DEVELOPED CIVILIZATION IS OSSIFIED BY THE *CHAMELEON SHADOW*, THE *LACAR EXODUS* ACCELERATES.















ONCE THE APEX SPECIES OF THEIR UNIVERSE, THE LACARS NOW DRAW NEAR TO THEIR NEW **PROMISED LAND** KNOWING FULL WELL THAT, IN THE VAST REACHES OF OUTER SPACE, NOWHERE CAN BE CALLED **HOME**.

EARTH. ARCHEAN EON.

NEVERTHELESS, BOWING TO CONVENTION,
THAT IS WHAT THEY WILL CALL THIS PLANET...



"WE SHOULD HAVE DESTROYED THAT ROCK. OUR GALACTIC PROTECTORATE CANNOT BE SEEN TO BE DEFEATED BY SUCH AN **INVADER**!"

"GENERAL, SOMETIMES EVEN **GODS** MUST MOVE ON. THE NEW WORLD MAY LACK THE GLORY OF OUR GREAT PYRAMIDS--BUT I PROMISE YOU, WE SHALL TRANSFORM THE **GRAVEYARDS** AT THE BOTTOM OF THEIR OCEANS INTO **GREAT CITIES**...THOUGH ITS SKY IS NOT GREEN, BUT BLUE."

YET ONE OF THEIR NUMBER IS LEFT BEHIND...



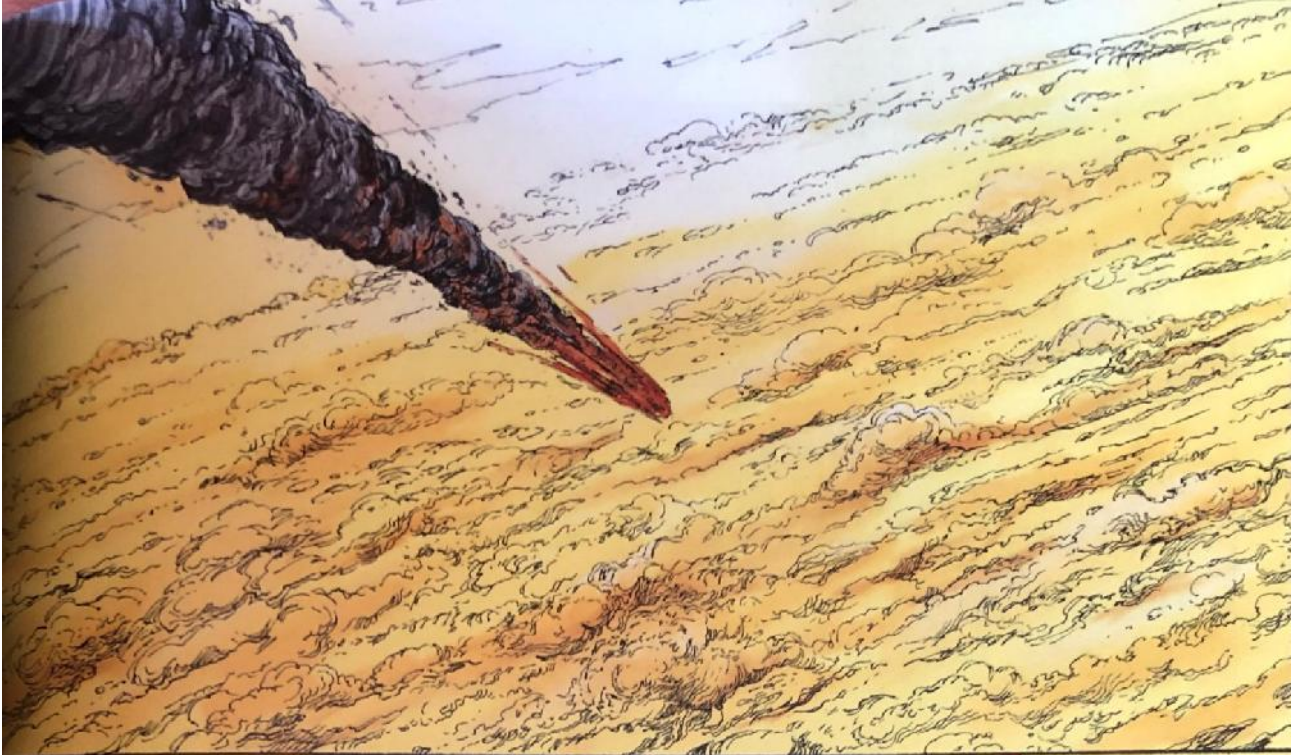
...ABANDONED TO FATE.



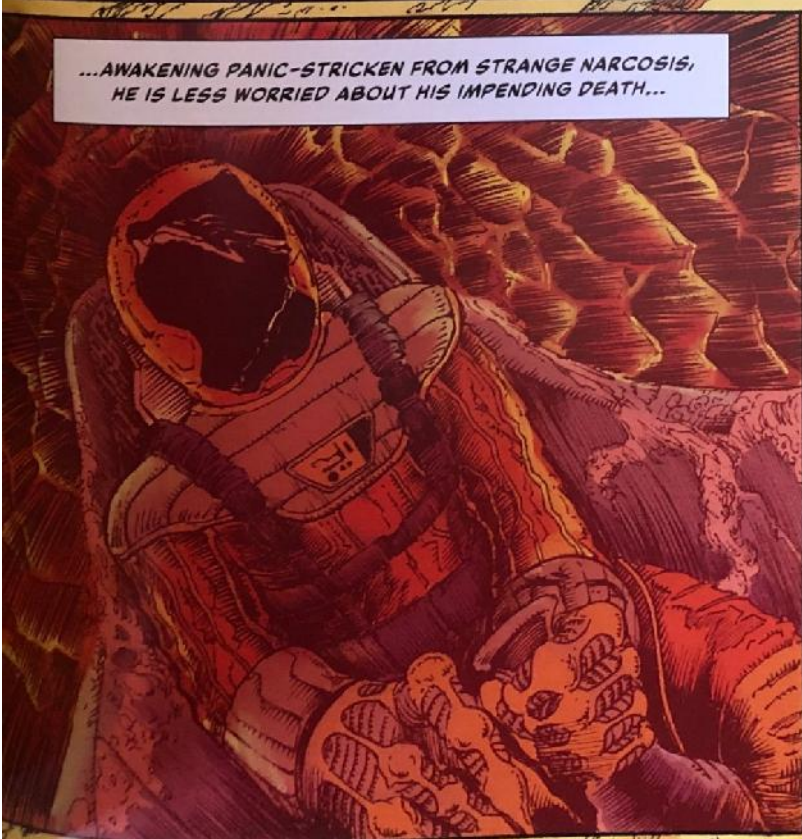
3038 AG. CLUSTER BLUESHIFT, RCTR-IL.

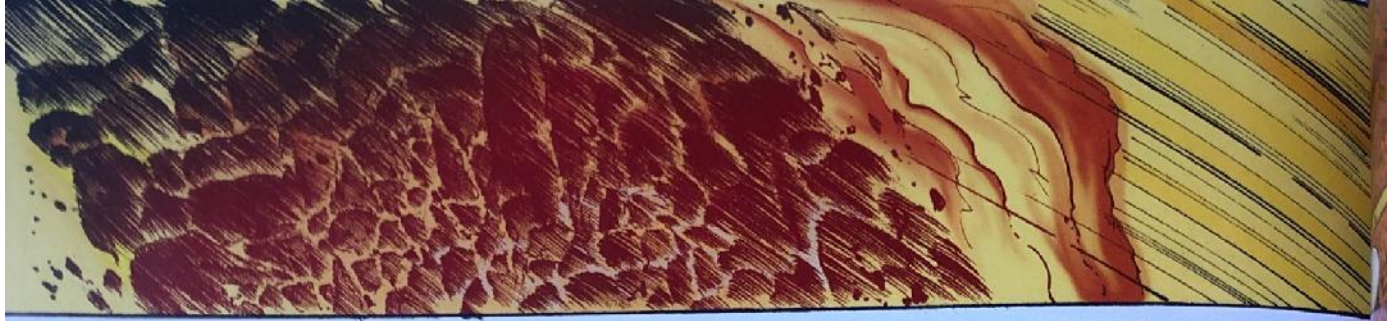


ABDUCTED BY AN ENTITY FROM TIME IMMEMORIAL,
SCOUT 5 PLUMMETS INTO AN *ALIEN WORLD*...



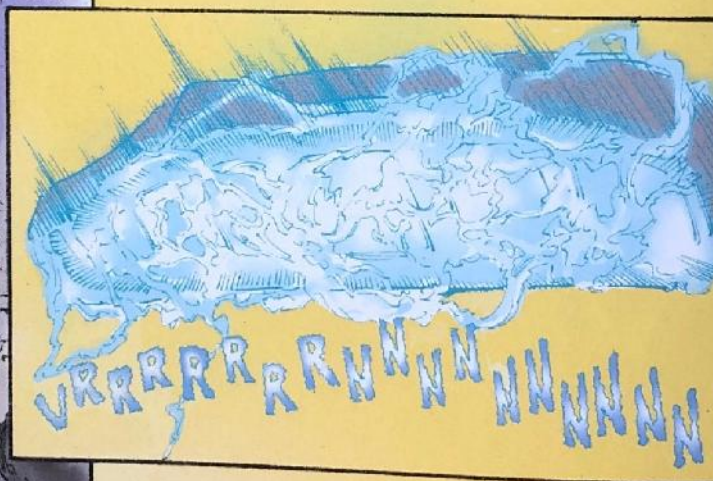
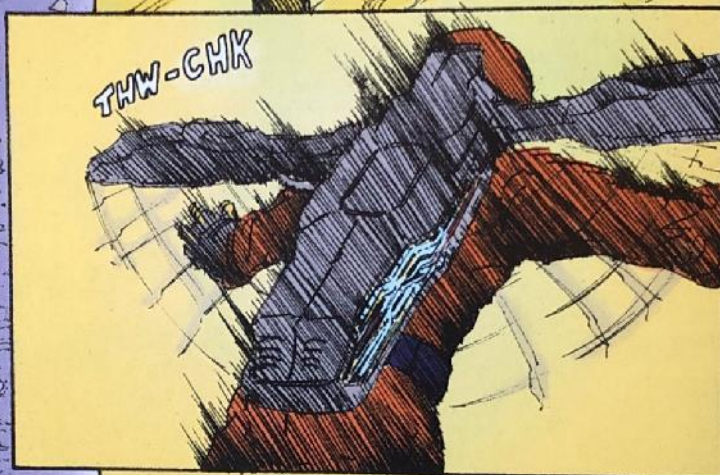
...AWAKENING PANIC-STRICKEN FROM STRANGE NARCOSIS,
HE IS LESS WORRIED ABOUT HIS IMPENDING DEATH...





...THAN BY THE FACT THAT HIS SHIP HAS
BEEN MORPHED BY THE **CHAMELEON
SHADOW**...INTO SOMETHING ONLY
HINTED AT IN **NIGHTMARES** BY THE
LOST MEMORIES OF A DEEP PAST.









IN SUSPENSE...TIME...
...BAITS THE MIND.



THE FOSSIL PROVOKES THE
TIME-BOUND MIND TO
**RECONFIGURE WHAT
HAS BEEN AND REWRITE
WHAT IS YET TO COME.**

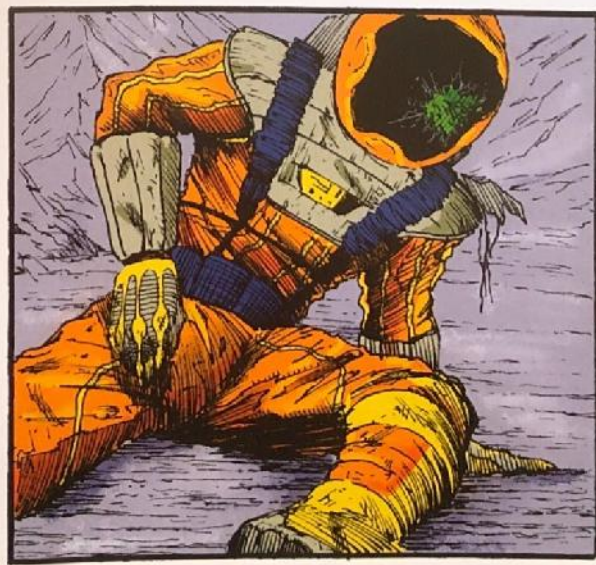


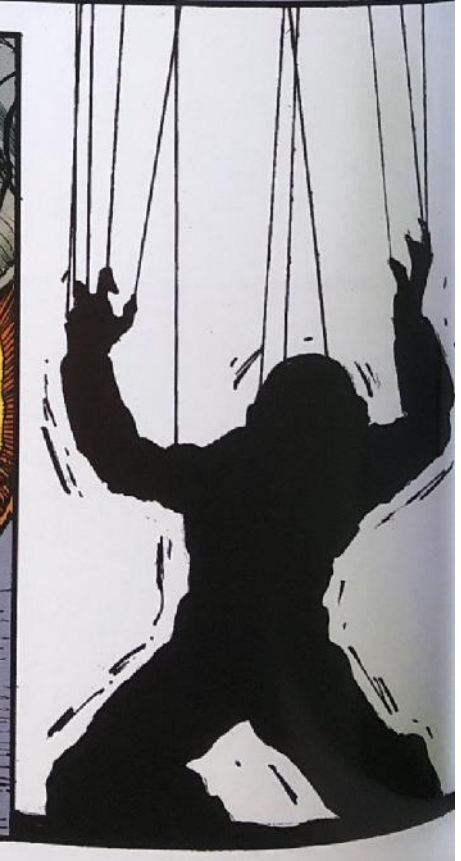
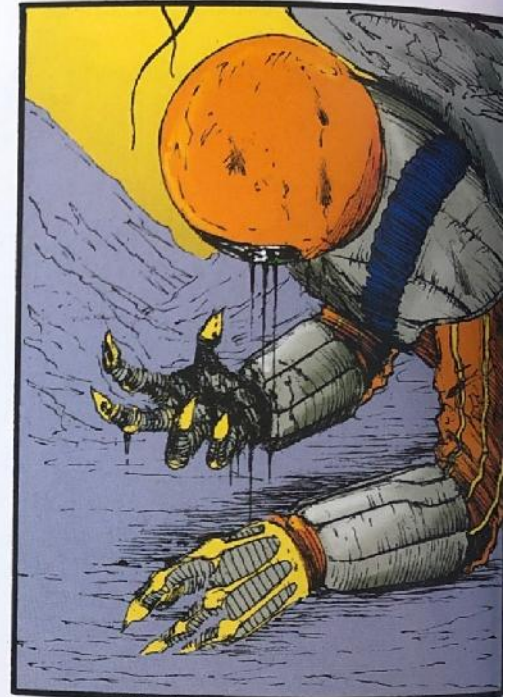
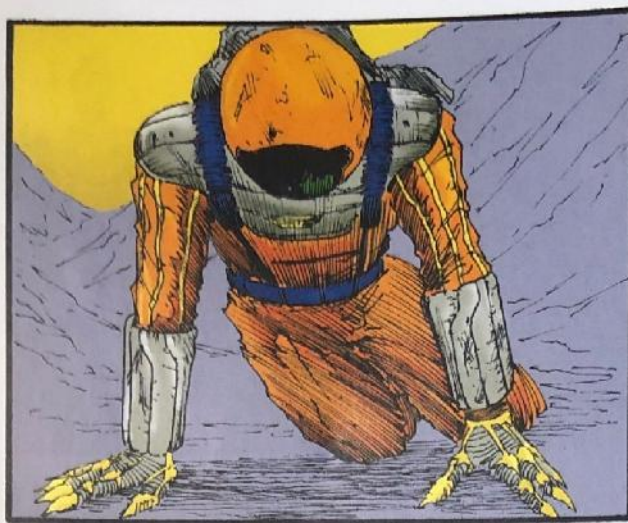
I SEE... MYSELF...

...A DEEP MEMORY
THAT IS NOT MINE...

...AN INANIMATE WORLD...WHERE
ONCE THERE WAS **LIFE**--NOW THERE
IS ONLY A RELIEF CARVED IN STONE,
RECOUNTING A TALE OF THE
MEAN TIMES OF THE PAST...

...BUT ALSO A RETELLING
OF THE **FUTURE**...





AWOKEN BY THE MYSTERIOUS LOADED FIGURE AKARANA, THE MONAZZEINS HAVE DEDICATED THEIR LIVES TO THE CULT OF TIME, AND A PLANETARY RENAISSANCE HAS TRANSFORMED THE ISLE OF RECTORS.

ONCE I DESCEND, YOU KNOW WHAT IS TO BE DONE.

INDEED, I SHALL SLEEP, AND IN SLEEP...

?!
WHAT IS IT?
WHAT DO YOU SEE?

DOWN BELOW--AN OUTSIDER!
THE CREATURE IS INJURED!

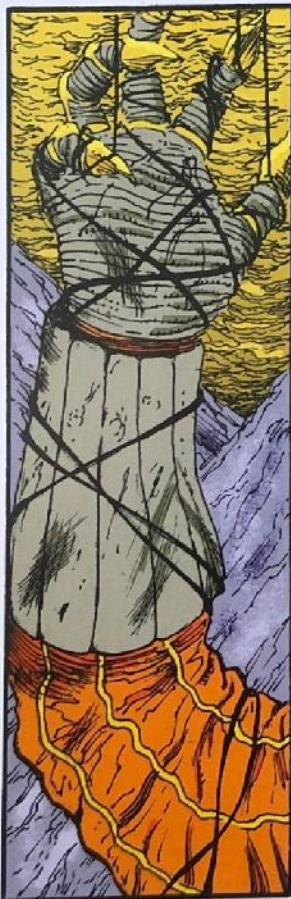
IF ONLY IT COULD SEE US.

IT CANNOT.

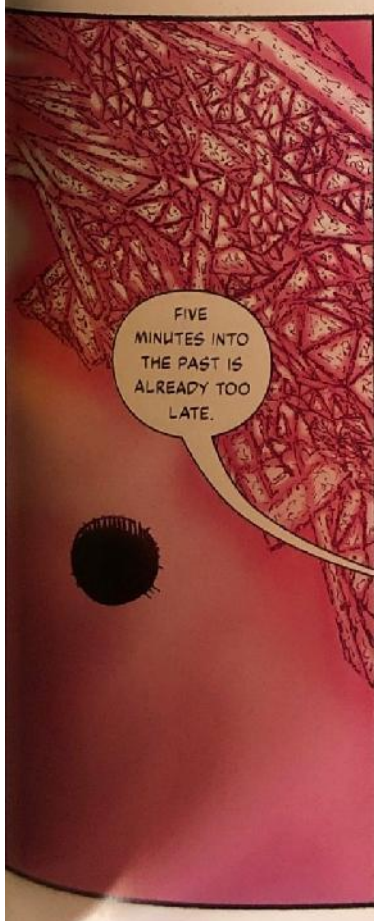
IT MAY HAVE ARRIVED ON OUR PLANET, YET IT REMAINS BOUND BY ITS OWN WORLD.

UTTERLY OCCULTED FROM THE COMMON RECOGNITION OF REALITY, WITHIN WHAT APPEARS TO ORDINARY SENSES AS A **MOUNTAIN SOLID THROUGH AND THROUGH**, THE MONNAZEINS HAVE BUILT THEIR TEMPLE ACCORDING TO THE **GRAND ARCHITECTURE OF TIME**. AS SCOUT 5 AWAKES TO A STRANGE LAND AND UNKNOWN SENSATIONS...IT SEES BEFORE IT ONLY THE IMPREGNABLE FACE OF A **MOUNTAIN**, PERCEIVING NOTHING OF THE MONNAZEINS SURVEYING THE SCENE FROM THEIR **COUNTERFACTUAL REDOUBT**.

WHAT CAN WE DO TO HELP IT?



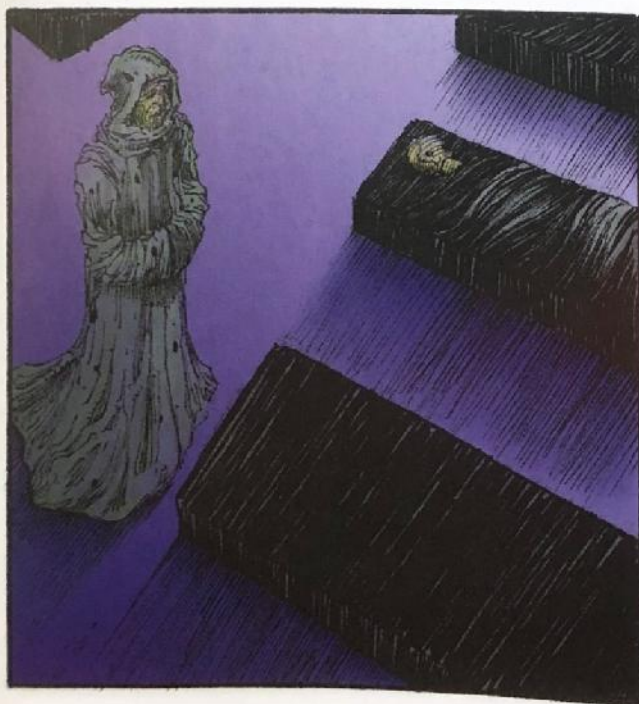
FIVE
MINUTES
THE PAST
WAS
LATE



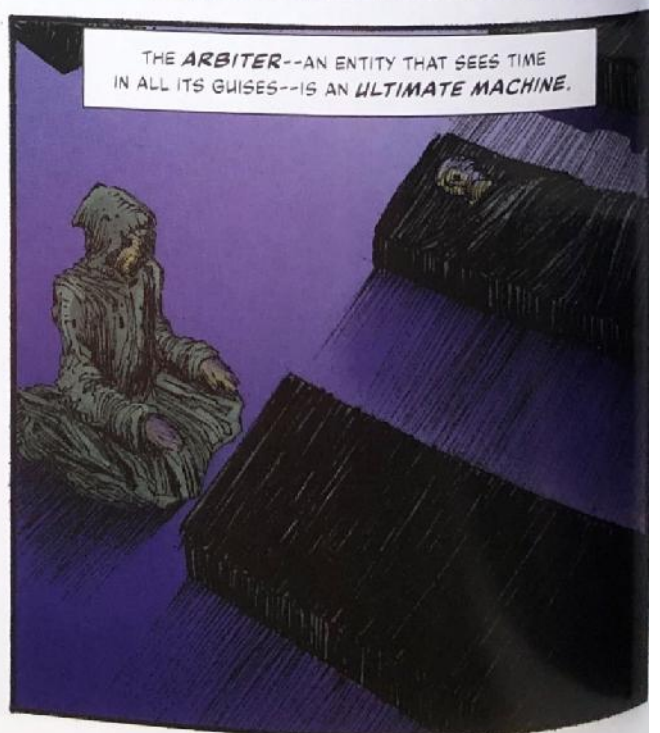
AND NOW ONLY ONE REMAINS, TO
CONSUMMATE THE *RECURRENCE*...

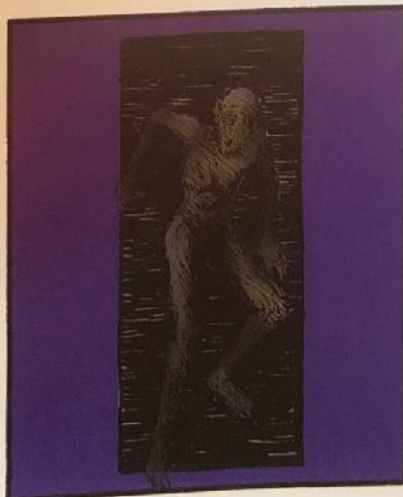
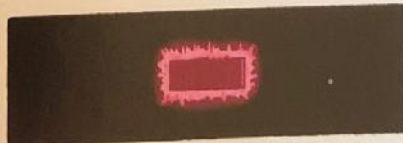
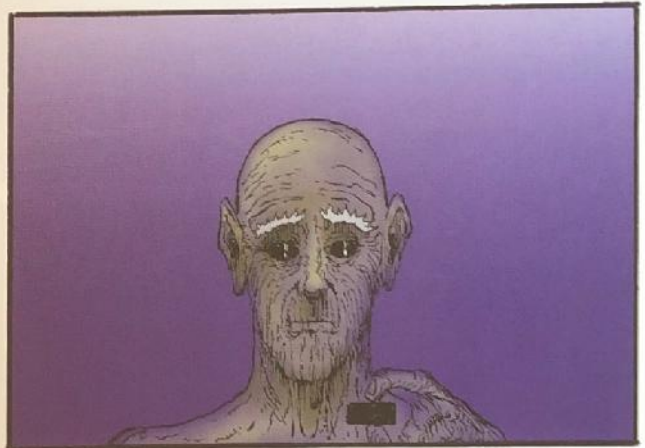
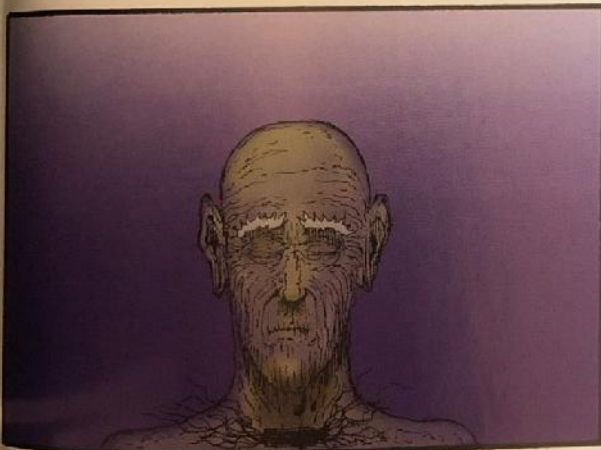


...HE MOVES TO THE
CHAMBER OF REST.



THE *ARBITER*--AN ENTITY THAT SEES TIME
IN ALL ITS GUISES--IS AN *ULTIMATE MACHINE*.







IT DESCENDS THROUGH THE BARRIERS OF TIME
AND TAKES WITH IT ITS OCCUPANTS...

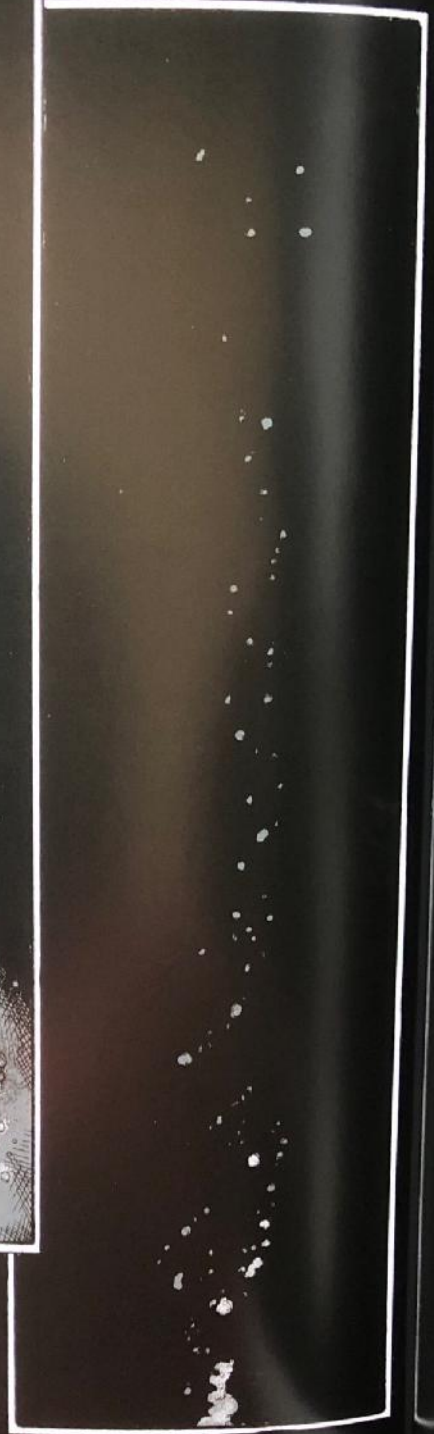
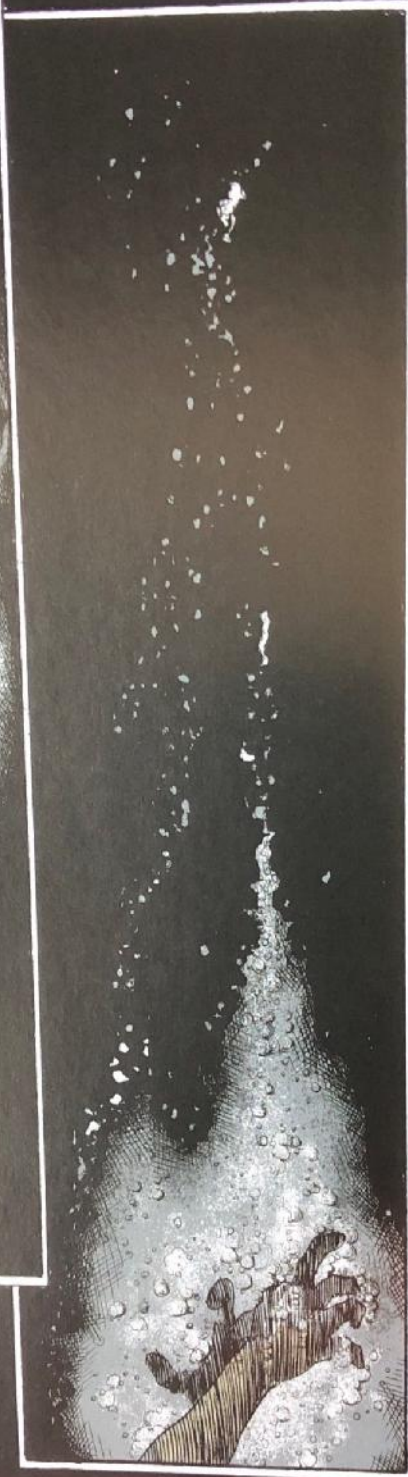


...LIKE A WORLD THAT CRUMBLES
WHEN NO ONE IS WATCHING.









FUSION WITH THE *ULTIMATE MACHINE* IS COMPLETE.

THE FUTURE IS NOW PAST.



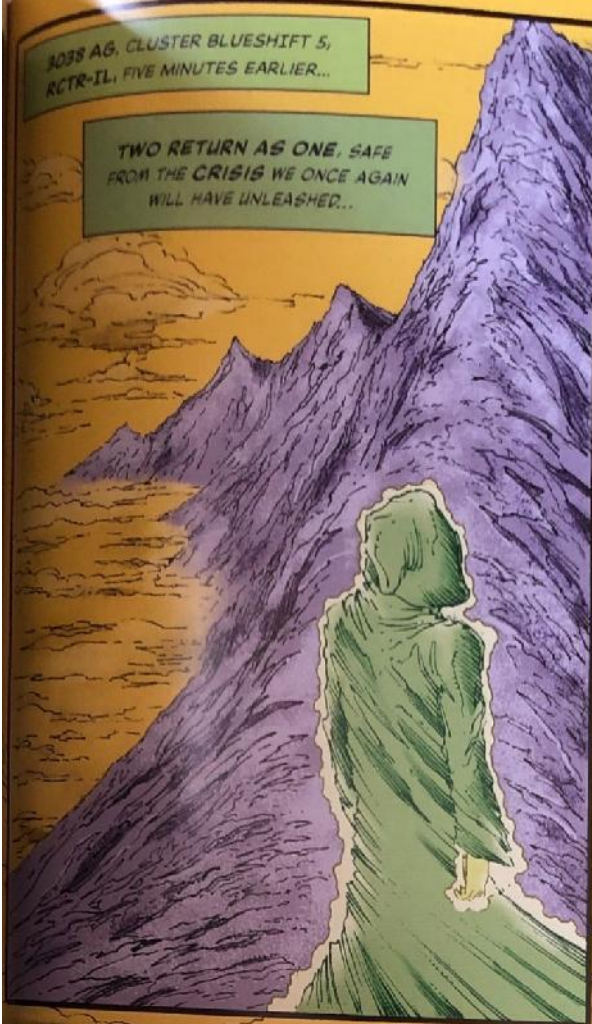


THE *SYNTHESIS* ACCOMPLISHED, DEATH IS NEGATED, AND *RETURN* COMMENCES.

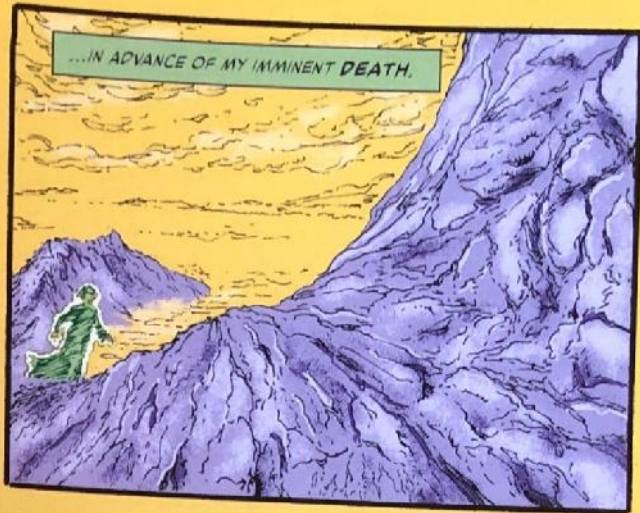


3038 AG, CLUSTER BLUESHIFT 5,
RCTR-IL, FIVE MINUTES EARLIER...

TWO RETURN AS ONE, SAFE
FROM THE CRISIS WE ONCE AGAIN
WILL HAVE UNLEASHED...



...IN ADVANCE OF MY IMMINENT DEATH.



THERE IS INDEED GREAT VIRTUE
IN STEALING YOUR OWN CORPSE.

YET ALL WE DO IS *BUY TIME*, DELAY THE INEVITABLE--AN INEVITABLE
THAT HOLDS NEITHER MEANING NOR FEAR FOR TWO THAT *RETURN*.

AS FOR THOSE WHO SEE TOMORROW,
WHO KNOWS THEIR FATE?

PERHAPS SOME WILL AT
LAST LEARN, AS DID WE...



...TO NAVIGATE THE
TWISTED WAYS OF TIME.



TO SEE THROUGH TO THE
OTHER SIDE OF THE MIRROR.



IN WALKING THIS CIRCLE, WE CONTINUE
TO AFFORD THEM ENDLESS CHANCES...

PERHAPS WE SHOULD REMOVE THEIR EVERY MEMORY
OF LIVING, THOSE WHO ARE ALREADY DEAD NEITHER
COVET LIFE NOR SEE DEATH AS A PERIL.

OR FURNISH THEM WITH A NEW MEMORY,
LET THEM BELIEVE THAT THEY ARE IN A NEW
WORLD, REINCARNATED AFTER DEATH.

BUT WHAT KIND OF SOLUTION IS IT TO
EXCHANGE ONE ILLUSION FOR ANOTHER?

EVEN BETTER, LET THEM REMEMBER NOT INTO
WHICH WORLD OF SLAVERY THEY HAVE BEEN
BORN. CONFOUND THEIR MEMORIES WITHOUT
DISCRIMINATION, LET ALL WORLDS COMMINGLE...

OR PERHAPS THE
ULTIMATE *ARBITRAGE*--

EFFACE THE MEMORY OF THE
BEGINNING OF THE UNIVERSE...

...WIPE THE BEGINNING OF THIS
WORLD FROM *EACH AND
EVERY* MEMORY.

AND WHEN THE BEGINNING IS
DELETED, WHEN THE UNIVERSE
NO LONGER RECALLS
ITS *INCEPTION*...

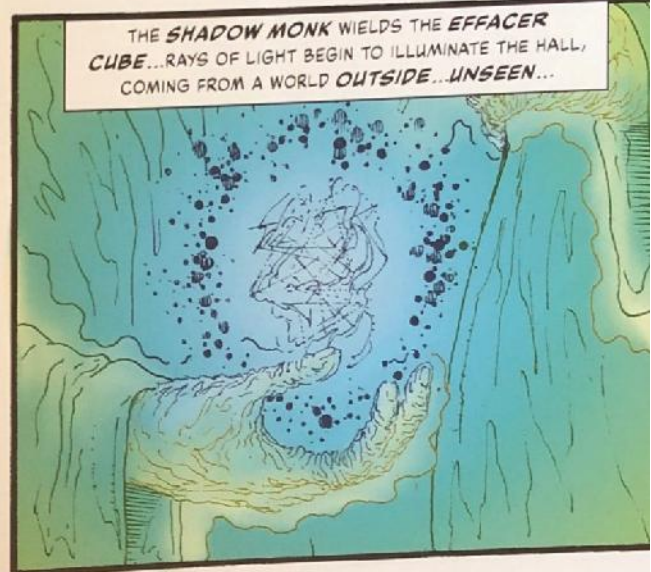
IT SHALL BE BORN WITH *NEW
INHABITANTS*. THE LOSS...THE
ANNULMENT OF A SINGLE ORIGIN...

...IS CONSISTENT WITH
MANY POSSIBLE ENDS.

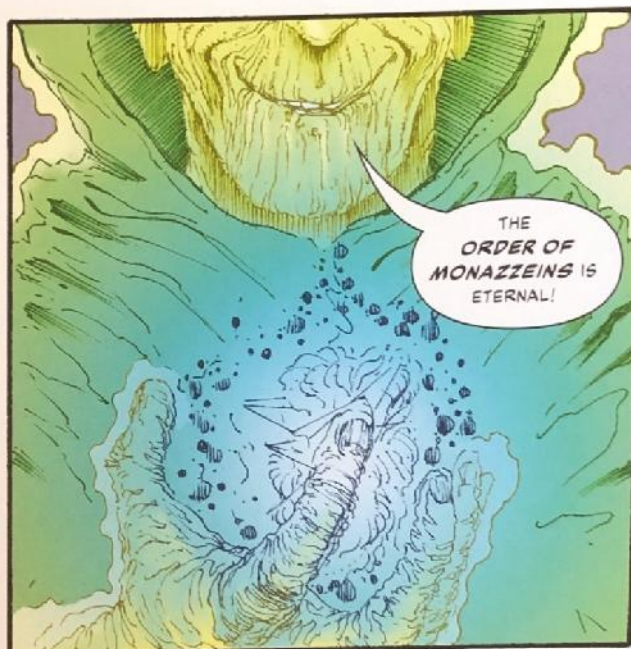
ERASE THE BEGINNING
OF THIS WORLD...

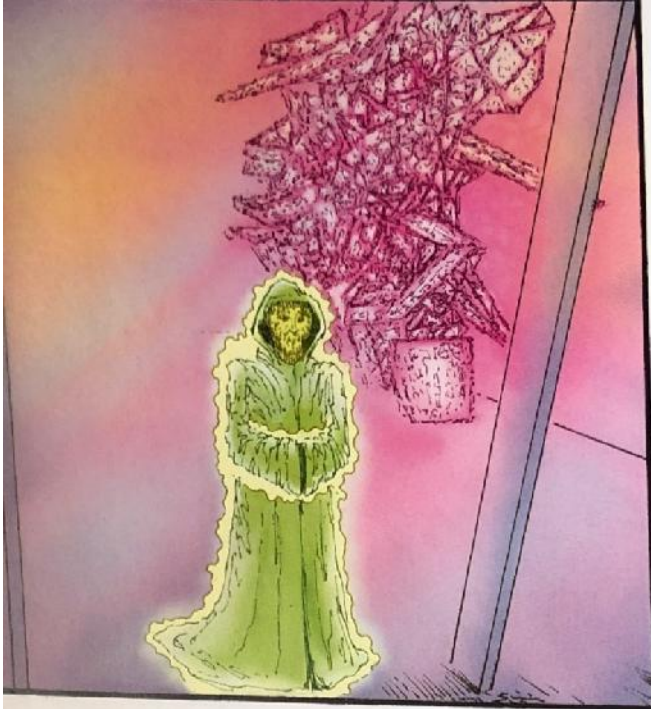
...AND BASK IN THE
POSSIBILITIES OF
ALL *OTHERS*.

FOR THE MISSION IS NOT TO GIVE THE
TRIBES FALSE HOPE, BUT TO DEPRIVE THEM
OF THOSE COMFORTS THAT DELUDE THEM.









I SEE MYSELF...

...THROUGH THE
MIRROR...AS...

FINALLY, IN THE FALL OF THIS
WORLD, WE COME EYE TO EYE...A
MIRAGE ON A LOOKING GLASS
THAT IS A WALL BETWEEN YOUR
WORLD AND MINE...

...NO LONGER DIVIDING...

...NOW **SHATTERED**...

IN QUIETUS
THERE COMES...



...THE COLLISION OF WORLDS!

ALWAYS THOUGHT
THERE'D BE *TIME*...

HAD IT ALL *WORKED*
OUT, DIDN'T I?

MY *GOD*, NATURE
IS A FUCKING *BITCH*.

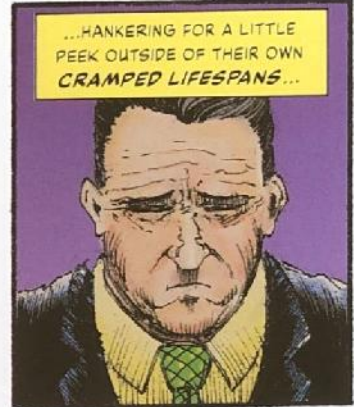
JUST
IMAGINE IT...

...TURNED INTO *YOUR*
OWN HEADSTONE,
FROM THE *INSIDE OUT*...

...AFTER A LIFETIME PEDDLING *SCI-FI PAP*
DRESSED UP AS *PHILOSOPHICAL REVELATION*...



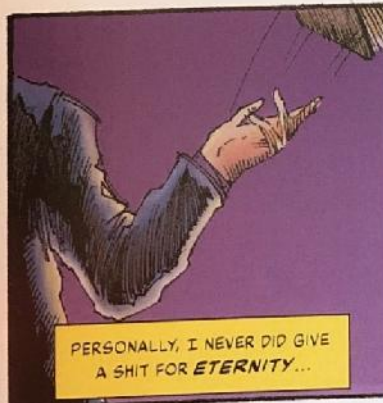
...AND ALL THOSE
LOSERS WHO
SWALLOWED IT...



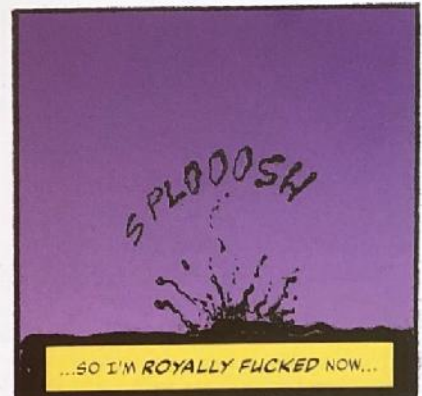
...HANKERING FOR A LITTLE
PEEK OUTSIDE OF THEIR OWN
CRAMPED LIFESPANS...



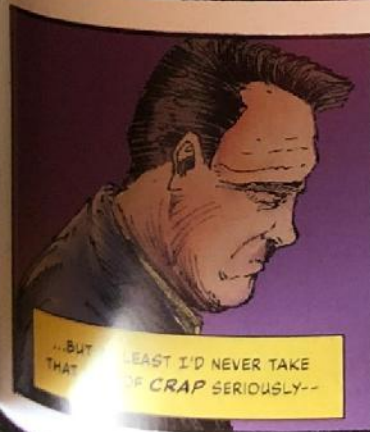
...SO DESPERATE
FOR SOME *GRAND*
PERSPECTIVE ON IT ALL.



PERSONALLY, I NEVER DID GIVE
A SHIT FOR *ETERNITY*...



...SO I'M *ROYALLY FUCKED* NOW...



...BUT
THAT'S AT LEAST I'D NEVER TAKE
OF *CRAP* SERIOUSLY--

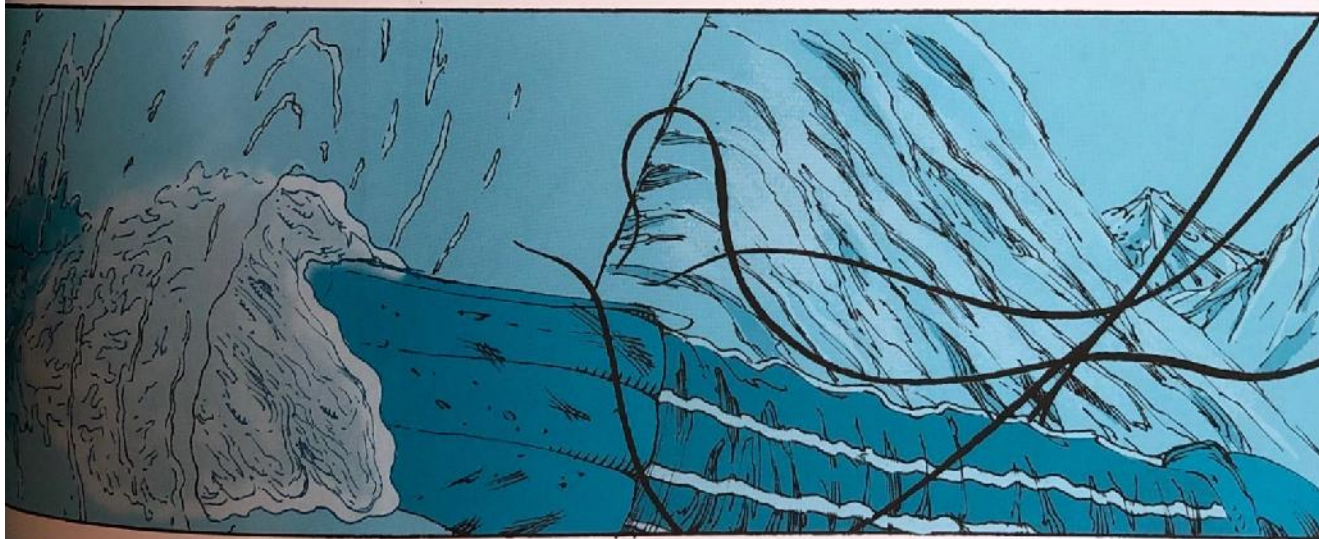


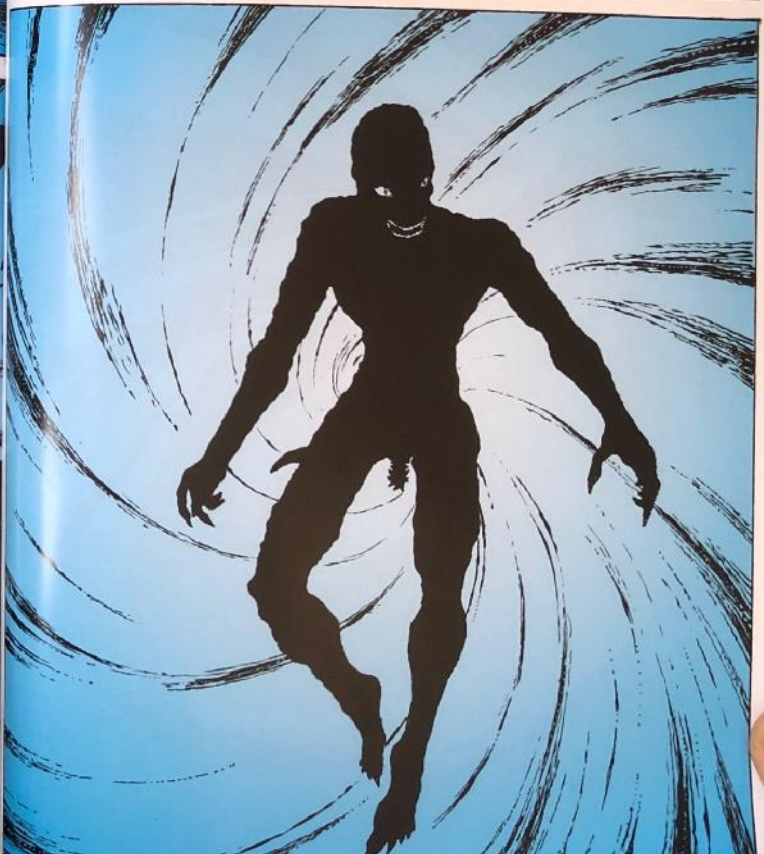
--AND NEITHER WOULD--

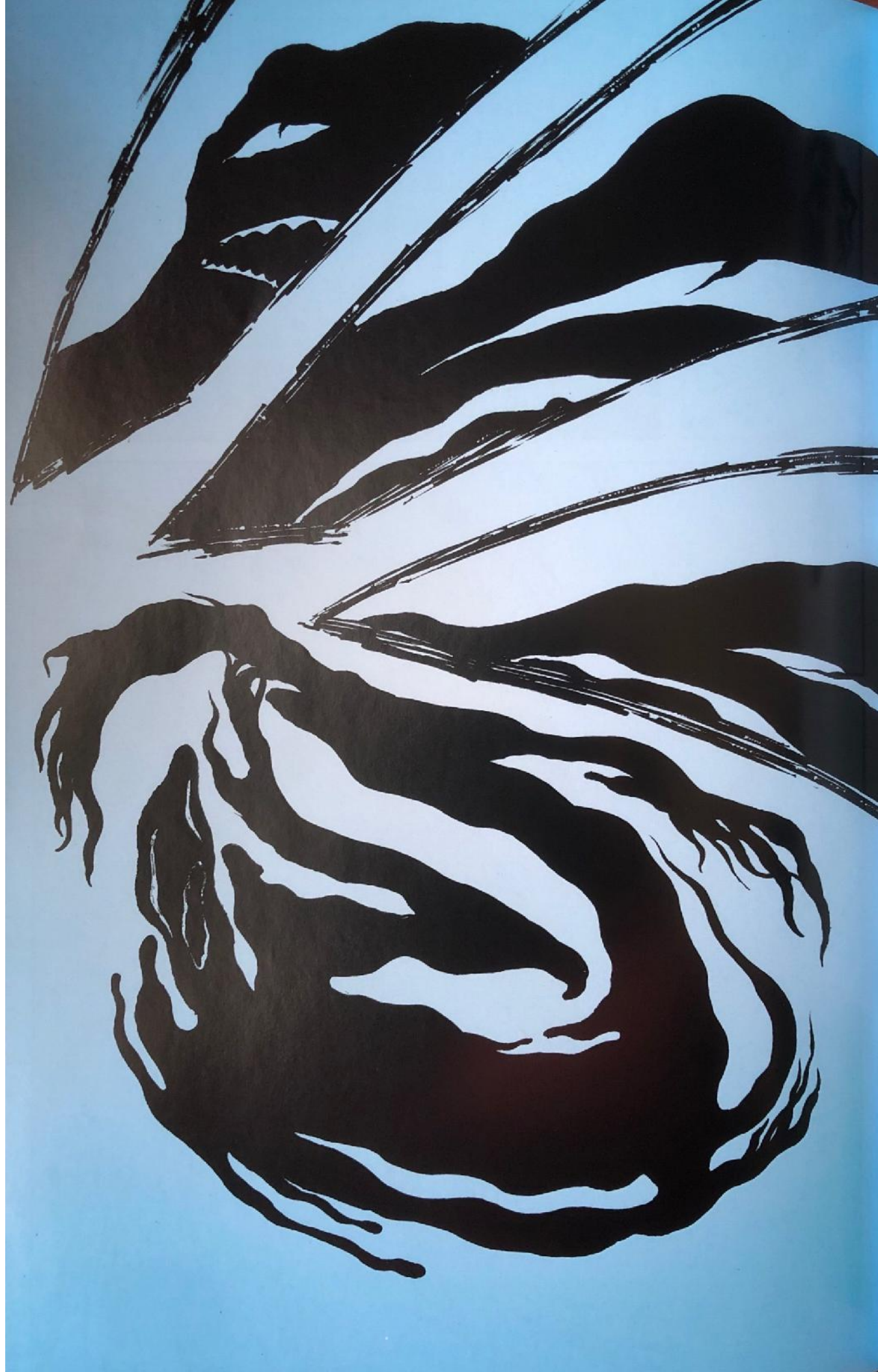


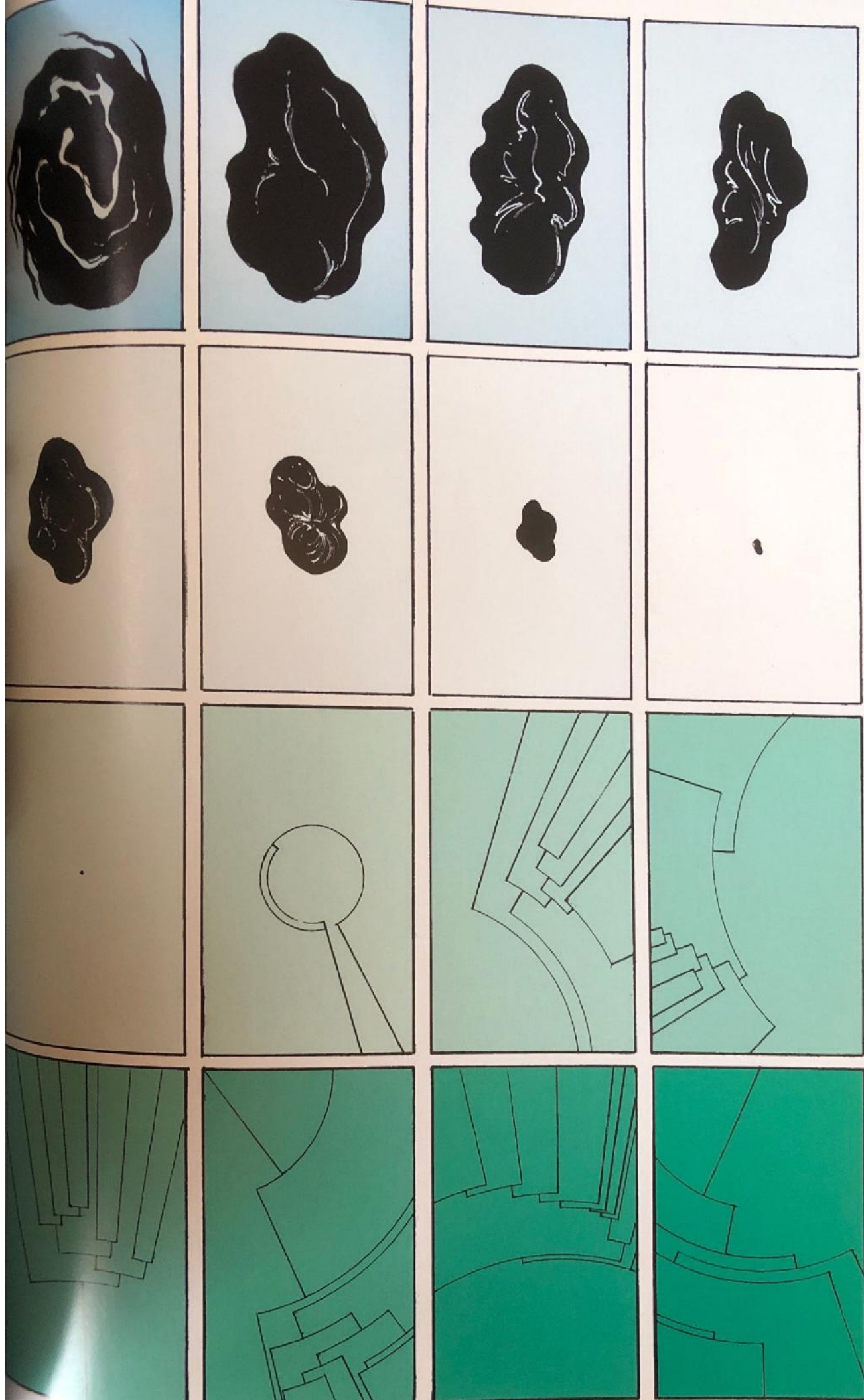
--MAAAAAAARGGGHH



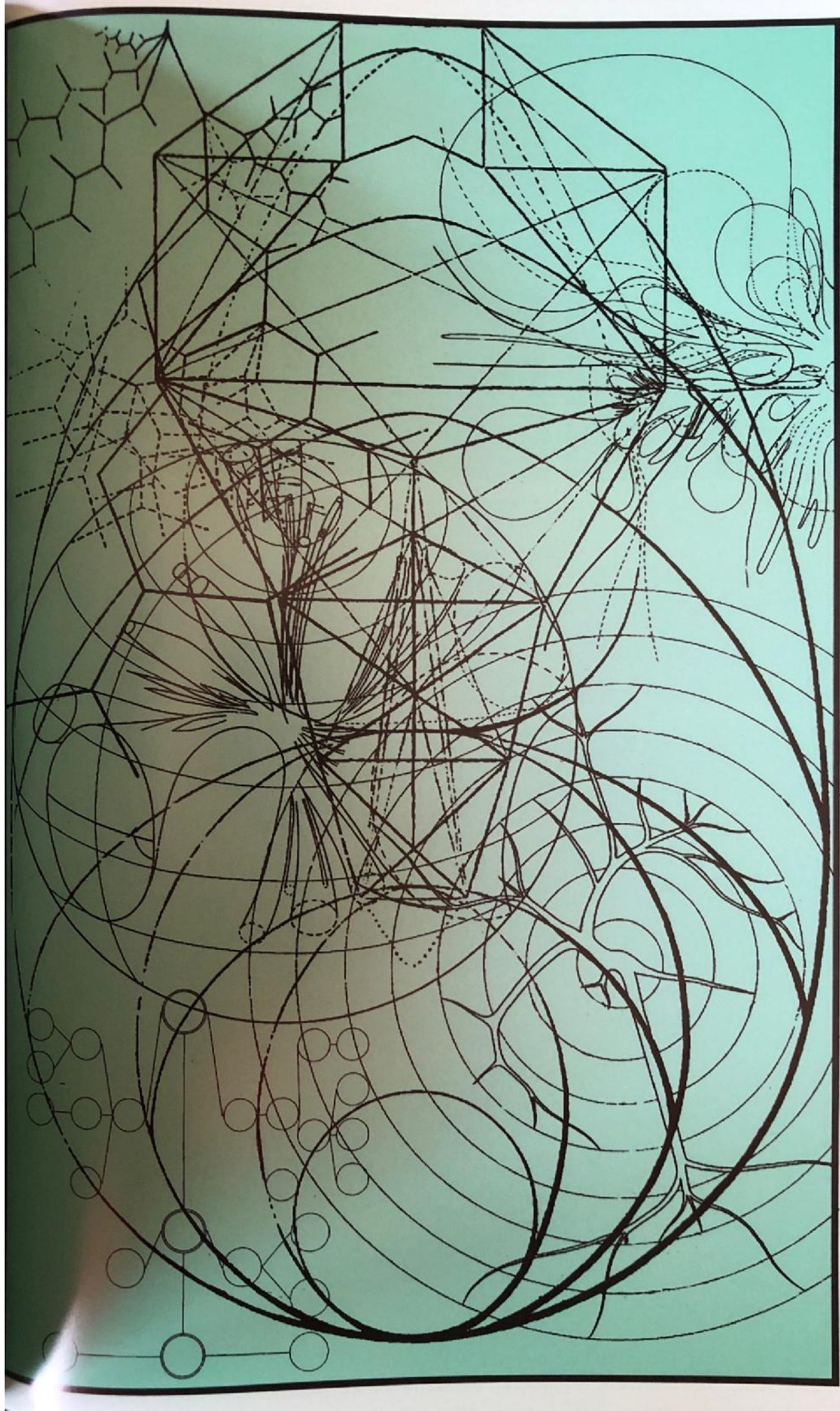


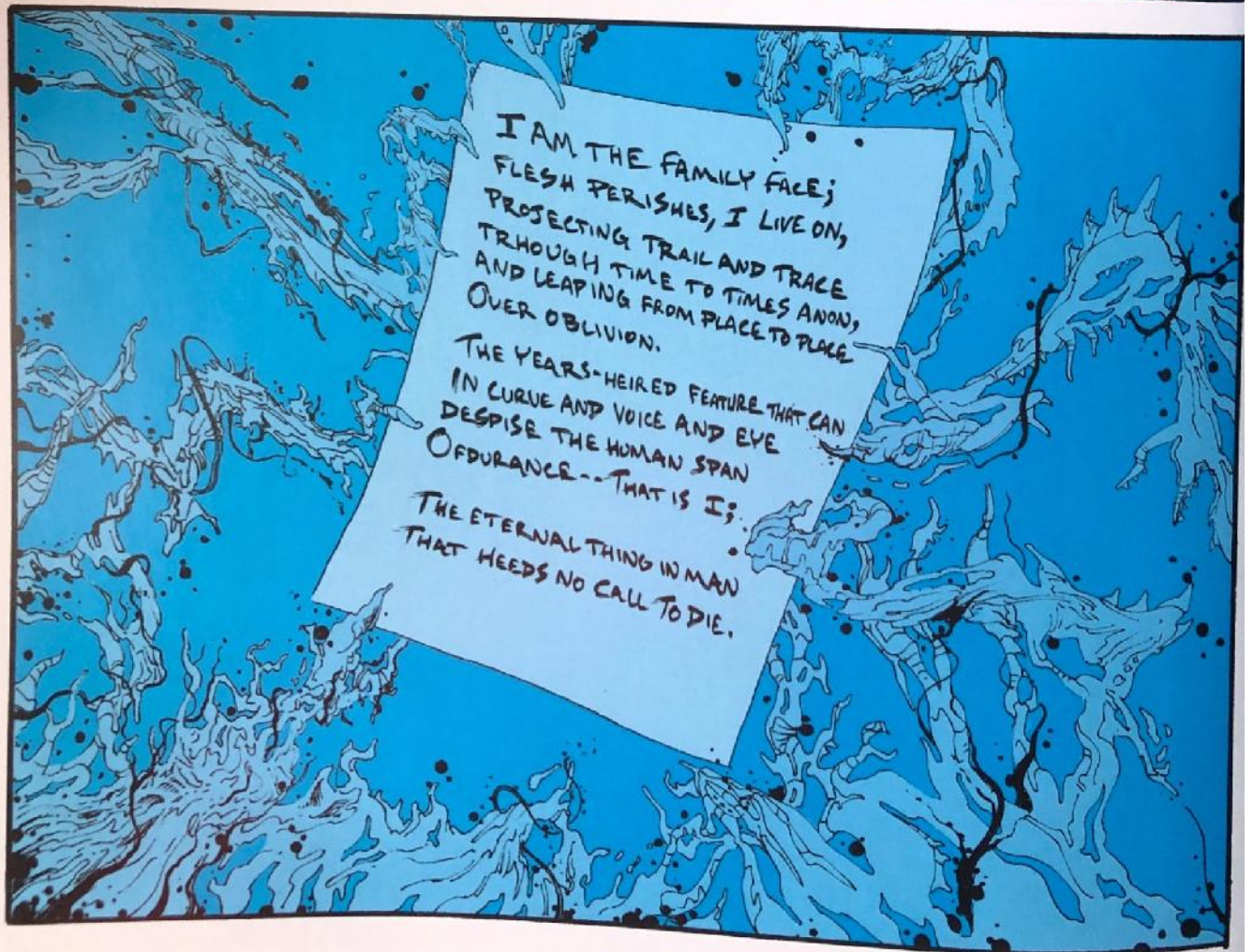


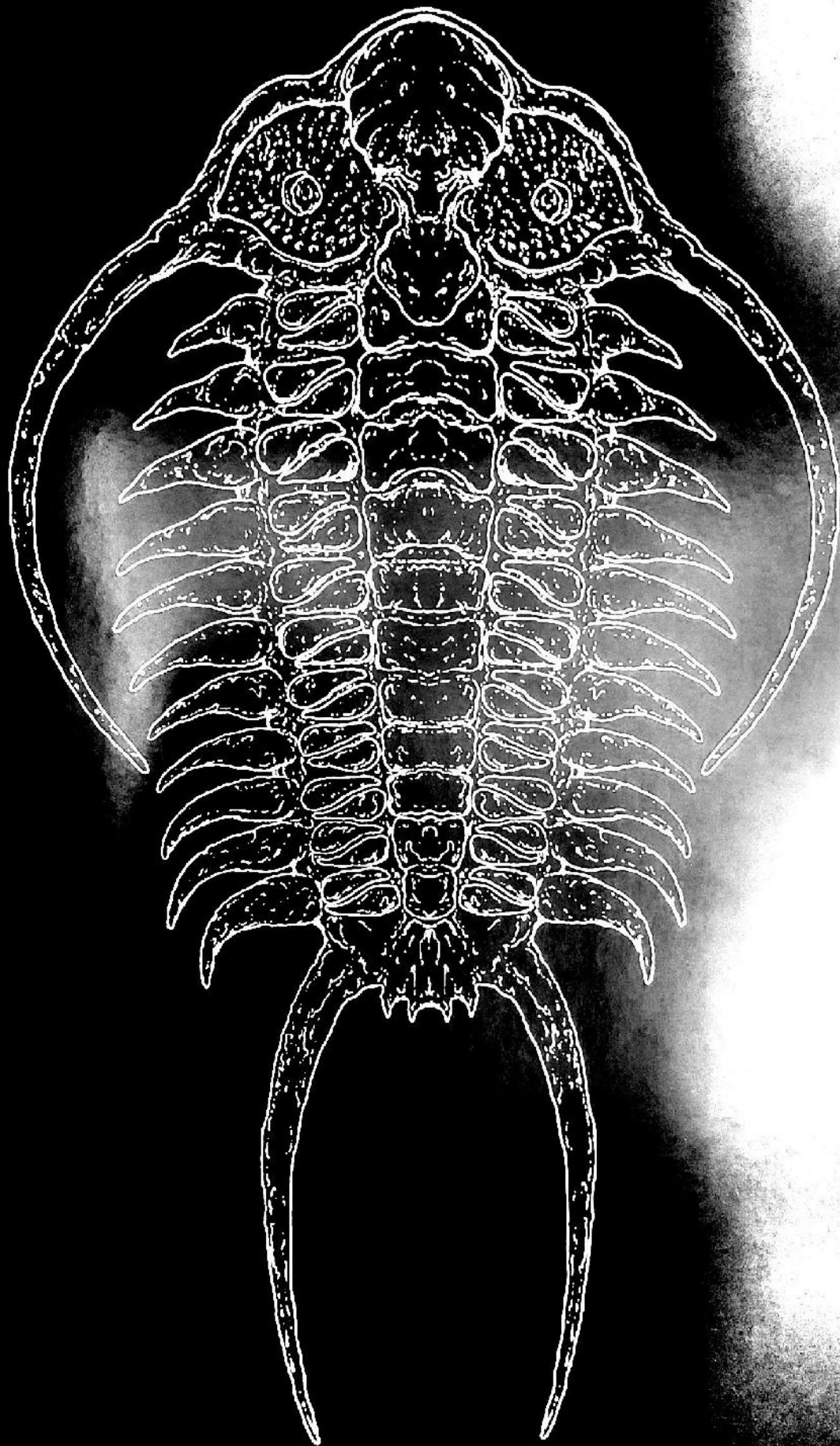












CHROMOSIS



“ **ORIGINAL COVER DESIGN** / The first version of the cover that we released back when I had no idea how long it would take to complete this, and when we all thought it would be out much, much earlier. This was also prior to having a final script from Reza, so I really had no idea of what was going to happen in the story per se, and hadn't really drawn much of it yet (which makes it difficult to conceptualize a cover), so, I went with the well-established comics and movie poster trope of hyper-plot-line collage. However, I never liked it, and was twisted into making it because of the ostensible publishing deadlines at the time. I'm very happy to have been able to replace it with something a bit more cryptic. ”

TRAUMA

NO. 2
FEB-MAR

THE FEAR OF FINITUDE

10¢

FEATURING...



THE REPTILIAN
RATIONALIST



THE INDEPENDENT
RESEARCHER



THE AGING
MONNAZEIN

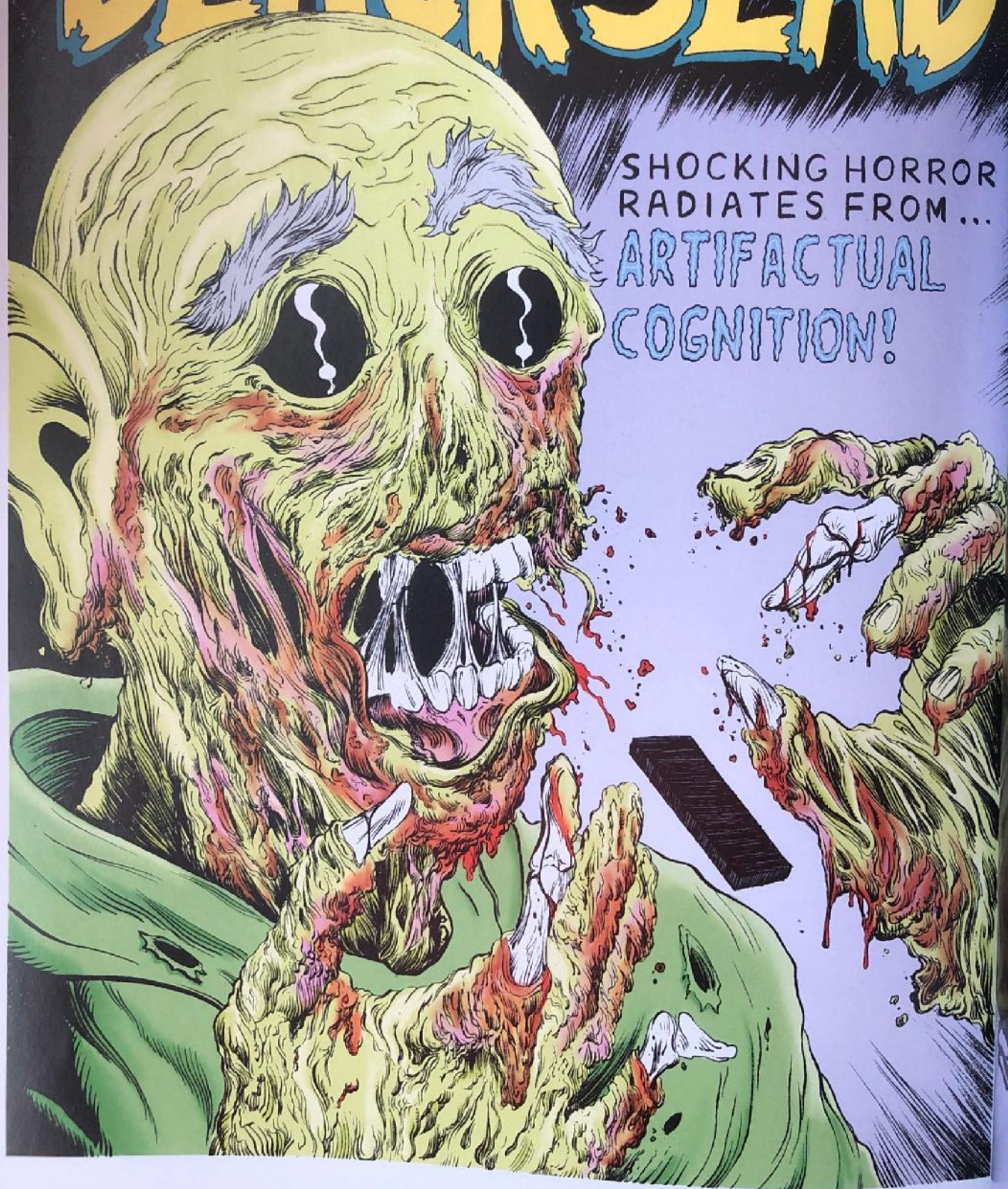


STRANGEST TALES OF TIME AND COMPUTATION!

BLACK SLAB

SHOCKING HORROR
RADIATES FROM...

ARTIFACTUAL
COGNITION!

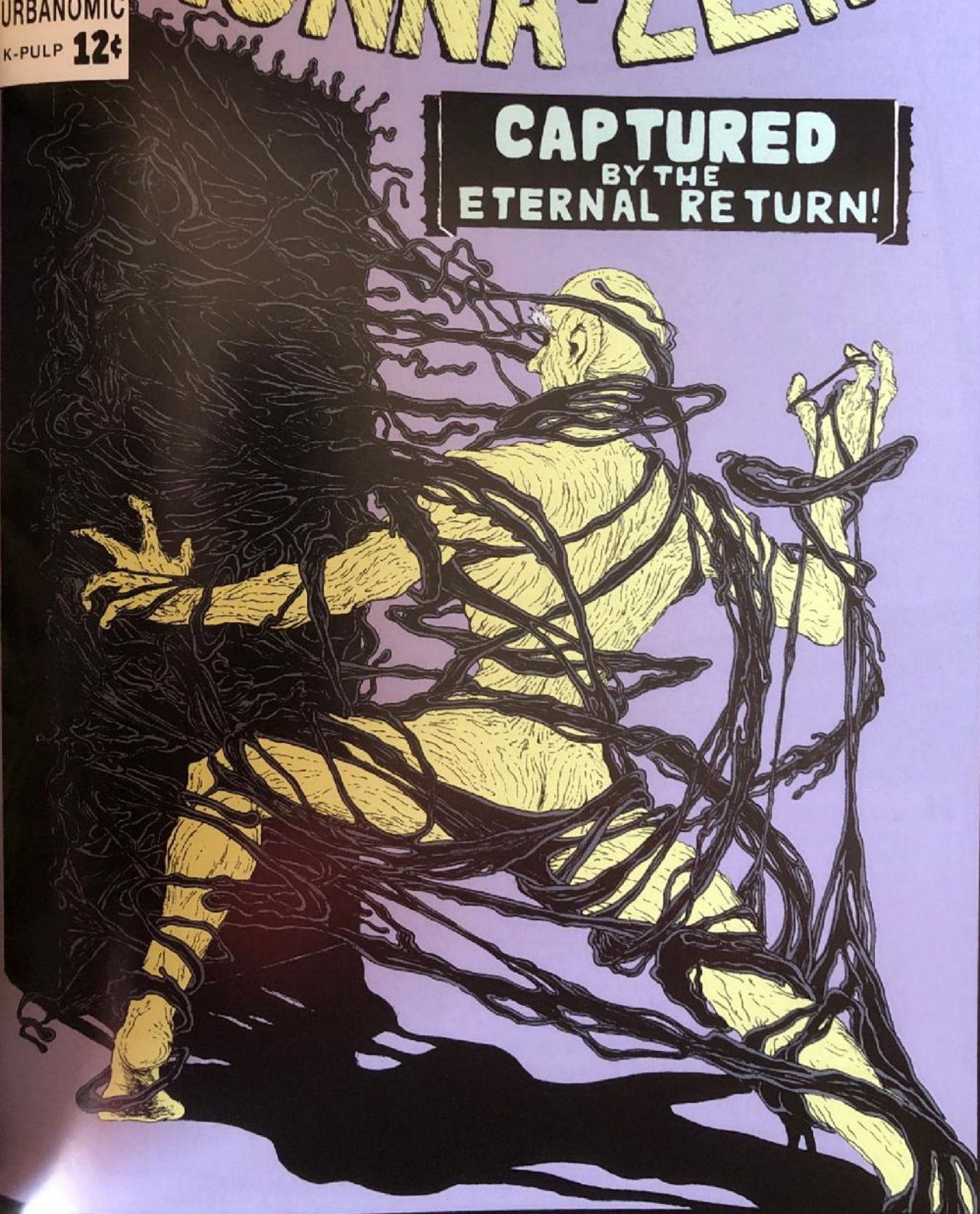




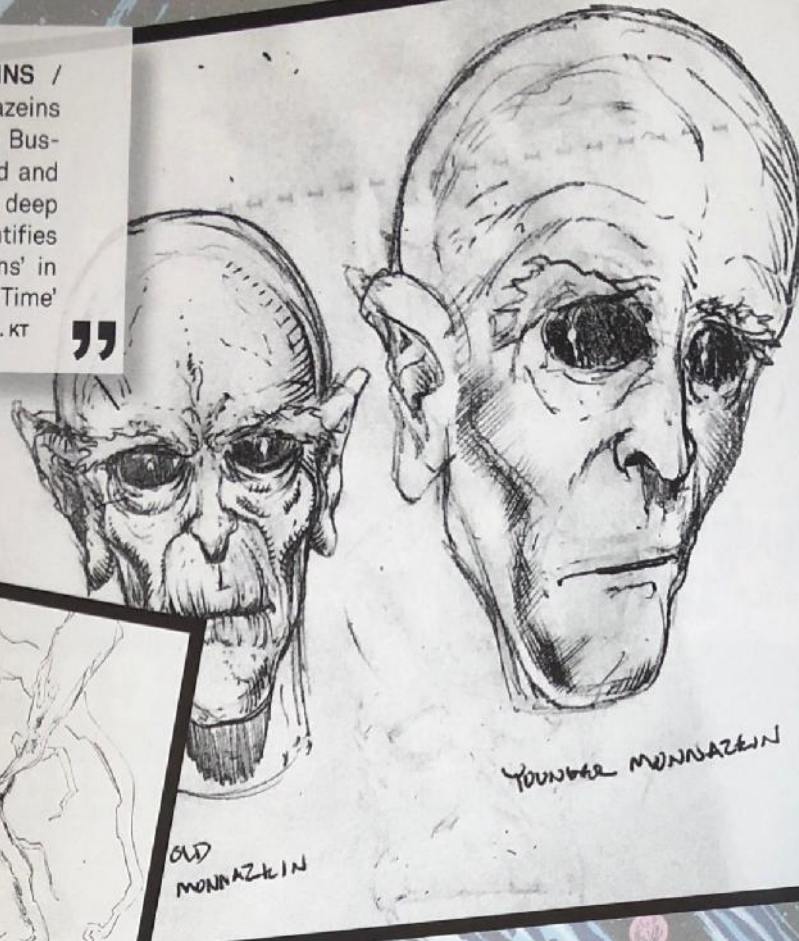
URBANOMIC
K-PULP 12¢

the AGING MONNA-ZEIN

CAPTURED
BY THE
ETERNAL RETURN!



“ **CONCEPT ART: MONNAZEINS /** The designs for the Monnazeins were loosely based on John Buscema's drawings of the aged and bald alien character with deep black eyes who simply identifies himself as 'He who Remains' in 'The Temple at the End of Time' story in *Thor* #245 from 1975. ”



“ **CONCEPT ART: SCOUT 5'S SHIP /** As an avid gamer, my initial idea for Scout 5's spaceship didn't originate from comics but from arcade games. A nameless protagonist in a tiny but fast vessel explores a very dangerous sector of the cosmos. What I had in mind was something from the spaceships catalogue known as space corps that came with the videogames in *R-Type* series: A perfect vessel for a lone ranger fighting against an evil hybrid techno-organic empire. ”

“ **CONCEPT ART: THE ULTIMATE MACHINE /** How should the most advanced technology for a group of highly enigmatic extraterrestrial monks who have initiated into a stoic cult of time look? Their monastery should be something like the Capuchin Crypt, where they live with their dead in harmony. Their ultimate machine—a device to go back in time, whether five minutes or five seconds ago, to make the world anew or to rewind the tape—should appear as the most innocuous object: their humble bed, in the shape of a black slab. The machine is a hard and impenetrable resting place. When the monks fall asleep, they activate the machine. The resting bed becomes something else, a liquid and fathomless medium to a world that could exist despite what has happened. The visuals were borrowed as much from replicating monoliths scene in *2010: Odyssey Two* as from the defamiliarizing prints of rocks made by Hercules Seghers. ”



THINKING THROUGH COMICS

Keith Tilford discusses his journey away from and back into the form

It is really only in the last five years that I have taken an interest in comics again, and between the career path I was convinced I would take as a teenager and the return to the form that led to this book, there was a fifteen-year gap. Yet even though during this time I had stopped drawing comics, I had never really stopped making art, and my approach to drawing has always been indebted to the technical lineage one finds in comic book illustration. In fact, when I made the move towards 'fine arts' it was *because* of comics that I was able

to intuit so easily some of the fundamental criteria for abstraction within artistic modernism when I discovered it. Yet for anyone familiar with both the history of comics and artistic modernism, this convergence should come as no surprise because the entire domain of depicting superpowers, and especially their deployment in comic book action sequences, is itself an appropriation of these principles involving the manipulation of form and space that elaborates, in a distinct manner within the comics form, these modernist tendencies of abstraction (with early figures such as Jack Kirby and Steve Ditko being the prime motivators).

I would have been unable to articulate any of this when I instead pursued studies at *art school*, having been more attracted at the time to the idea of being a *painter*, and subsequently seduced by the modernist *dupe* that art's truth was somehow fulfilled through romanticist notions of 'creative freedom' that still package the canon of modernism and ensure a well-lubricated market. There was also the dumb fact

that, at this point, I felt like I couldn't really tell a story with images (and with the exception of a few sample pages I abandoned, had never really tried). I had only ever done pin-ups and 'cover art', and of course, *what could be more aligned with the pin-up than modernist abstraction?* Nonetheless, I ultimately committed myself to art with a capital A due to other, very specific problems I had become concerned with through research and practice: If artistic modernism really presents a strategy wherein the thought that art is becomes a deter-

minable mode of thought or thought form within artistic procedures, what then does it really mean to *think*? This problematic inevitably led me away from exclusively art-historical

research towards philosophy and art theory, to ask: If art is ostensibly a legitimate and autonomous form of thinking, then in what ways can this thinking be articulated in relation to other forms of thought, and by extension, what might then be the possible consequences for and effects upon knowledge that art can be said to potentially engender (since I remain convinced that art does not in any strict sense *produce* knowledge...)? The fact that these are the kinds of inquiries that consumed me and which I have remained interested in ever since dropping out of comics as I entered my twenties, nonetheless still reveals a continuity, given that I had divorced myself from a form that—with the genre of silent comics as a challenging exception—can more or less be minimally defined through the combination of words and images, only to replace it with an 'artistic practice' inside

“ It was *because* of comics that I was able to intuit so easily some of the fundamental criteria for abstraction within artistic modernism when I discovered it. ”

of a field that holds these in dialectical tension, i.e., where images are *supplemented* with words through art-historical, critical, and theoretical discourse.

Nowadays, the immense creative production embodied in the history of comics gives plenty of scope for an analogue of this kind of supplemental logorrhea—because, like it or not, in spite of the deprecating brush-off the form largely receives from the

non-comics-reading public, we are living through a time when comics are inversely becoming increasingly academicized. This dilemma has produced such mind-numbingly rebarbative slogs as Michal Szawerna's *Metaphor*

icity of Conventionalized Diegetic Images in Comics: A Study in Multimodal

Cognitive Linguistics, which, although certainly not without merit and definitely of interest to the analytic philosophy

inclinations of my own research and writing, is a clear example of why such academicization is offputting to those 'working in the industry'. Evidence, all the same, that the form is more significant in its history than most people realize. Accepting that the *full* history of comics is more complex than I will every have time to legitimately come to know, my point of departure remains the innovations of the superhero genre, particularly those developed within the Marvel Universe in the 1960s, and their influence on wider culture, which are at this point undeniable given the existence of something like the MCU. Here, the comics form itself can be understood and evaluated as a system, one that became a simulation engine for the collision and synthesis of elements taken from elsewhere: early animation, cinema, mythology, SF and other literary genres, abstraction in art, design,

pop culture...a vista of experimental attitudes that has, especially since the 1990s with the accessibility of anime and manga to Western audiences, along with the implementation through software of FX depicting the formal lexicon of superpowers in video games, created a generative feedback loop between these different disciplines and fields of study within comics.

This compressed version of the new landscapes that emerged from interactions among diverse historical trajectories is all the evidence one needs to begin to understand that, while the concept of *worldbuilding* may have only recently come back into fashion

“ Immense possibilities are afforded by this form, which is entirely capable of producing new horizons for thought. ”

as a conceptual novelty in academic circles, and has

subsequently—unsurprisingly and inevitably—been

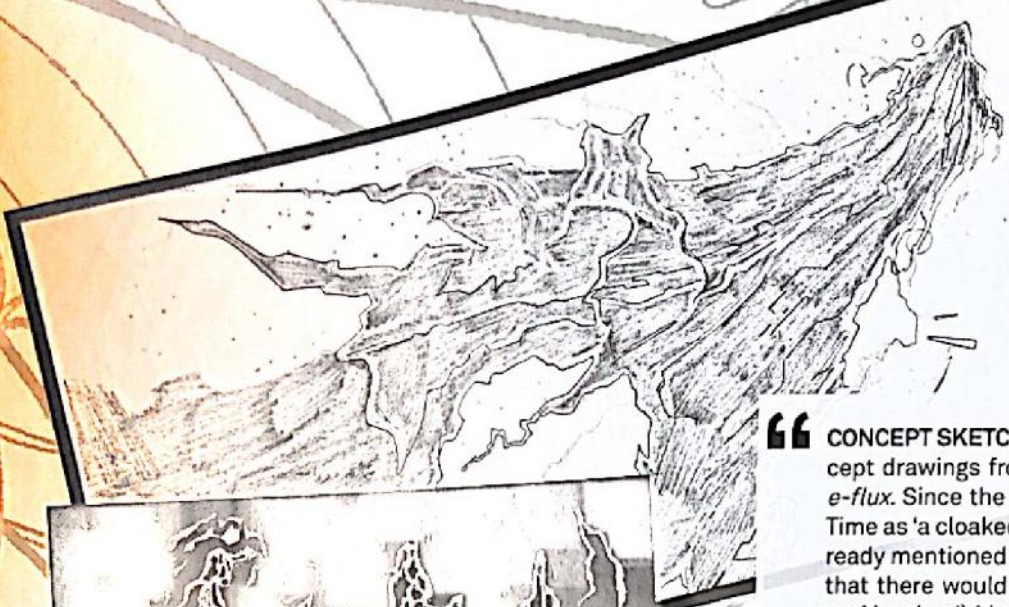
appropriated for the dis-

course on art, it has always been understood by comic creators especially, and implicitly. All the more reason for me to take the form seriously again, and while

I do not really see myself going forward as an artist without making more comic book art, as it turned out drawing comics is nothing like riding a bike.... This was by far the most difficult project I have undertaken, and no one involved severely underestimated how *long* it would take to complete more than myself. Yet through that work I have come to recognize that immense possibilities are afforded by this form, which is entirely capable of producing new horizons for thought. κτ



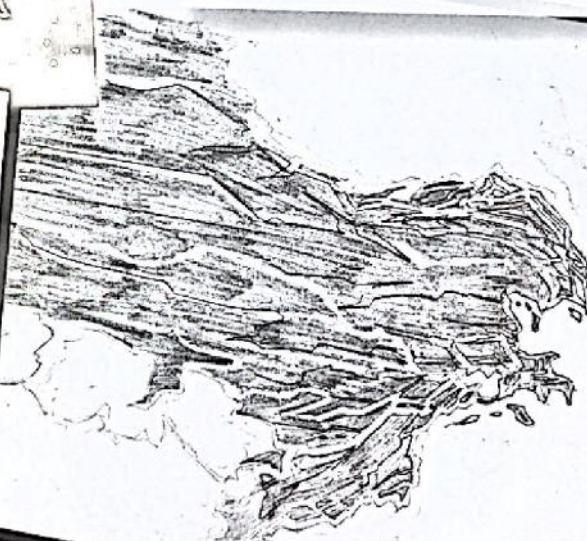
“ INFINITY GAUNTLET HOMAGE / An early junked homage page because I wasn't satisfied with the outcome of trying to abstract what is a fairly well-known spread by George Perez from his run on *Infinity Gauntlet* from 1991. This had a lot to do with the naive decision that I should ink this page entirely with a Hunt 102, having not practiced with that tool for almost twenty years, and it therefore just had an unsightly finished look to me (half out of not being as familiar yet with the tool, half out of not recognizing that not every line should be inked with the same tool...). I had wanted to add as many cosmic comics pages as possible without letting that be the sole focus of the book, which I think was achieved in the end without this one. Still, had there been time I would have re-drawn this page and found a place for it. ”



“ **CONCEPT SKETCHES: TIME** / Very early concept drawings from the version we did with *e-flux*. Since the script really only called for Time as 'a cloaked figure' (although it was already mentioned in that version of the script that there would be 'weapons and technology' involved) I had wanted to do something more abstract and with tech aesthetics, but actually couldn't figure it out in a consistent way that I was satisfied with, so went with a more normal 'tattered robe' design that still had some of those coded tech elements in it. These looked a bit like garbage on a few of the pages in the first version, in retrospect. Eventually there was space to do some pages where a variant of this early sketch version appears when we see Time transform into the Oumuamua asteroid. KR ”



“ **CONCEPT SKETCH: MONAZZEIN ROBE** / Early sketch. In retrospect, it would have been better to follow the lead here, but when it came time to do the pages it had been so long since I made this that I forgot about it entirely and went with something else I came up with on the spot. KR ”



“ The design of the figure of Time was based on a history of mysterious wandering characters in literature and cinema: masked, cloaked or schizophrenic figures of unfathomable power who appear to different people in different guises. The design had to be something between the look of a vagrant or a missionary with a tattered garment and a visitor from a different universe who shows us things both familiar and alien through the cracks of its disguise. Unlike but similar to Nyarlathotep and the figure in *The Masque of the Red Death*, Time appears as an old person with a cloak resembling a funeral shroud: some see that as a sign of their demise, some as a gift given by an old wisdom. RN ”

Block Universe (Block Time)

On one hand there are those who regard the passage of time as an objective feature of reality. [...] Philosophers in the opposing camp regard the present as a subjective notion, often claiming that *now* is dependent on one's viewpoint in much the same way that *here* is. Just as 'here' means roughly 'this place', so 'now' means roughly 'this time', and in either case what is picked out depends where the speaker stands. On this view there is no more an objective division of the world into the past, the present, and the future than there is an objective division of a region of space into here and there. Not surprisingly, then, supporters of this view deny that there is any ontological difference—any difference concerning simply *existence*—between the past, the present, and the future.

Often this is called the *block universe view*, the point being that it regards reality as a single entity of which time is an ingredient, rather than as a changeable entity set in time. [...] There are various respects in which the contents of the block universe appear to be arranged asymmetrically with respect to the temporal axis. For example, many common physical processes seem to exhibit a very marked temporal preference, occurring in one temporal orientation but not the other. This is why the events depicted in reversed films often seem bizarre. In the real world, buildings may collapse into rubble, for example, but rubble does not 'uncollapse' to form a building—even though, as it happens, the latter process is no less consistent than the former with the laws of mechanics. (It is this last fact that makes the asymmetry so puzzling).

— Huw Price

The Fate of the Universe, According to Boltzmann

This state will not be the final death of the universe, but a sort of slumber, from which it will awake after millions of millions of centuries. According to this theory, to see heat pass from a cold body to a warm one, it will not be necessary to have the acute vision, the intelligence, and the dexterity of Maxwell's demon; it will suffice to have a little patience.

— Henri Poincaré

Boltzmann Brains

If our anthropic criterion is simply 'the existence of intelligent observers', Boltzmann's fluctuation scenario predicts that the overwhelming majority of such observers should be the absolutely smallest deviations from thermal equilibrium that is compatible with one's definition of an intelligent observer. Plausibly, such a being would require only those body parts that are absolutely essential to cognition and consciousness—it would resemble a disembodied brain surrounded by thermal equilibrium. These minimal observers have become known as Boltzmann Brains.

— Sean M. Carroll

Time Direction

Boltzmann has made it very clear that the alternation of time directions represents no absurdity. He refers our time direction to that section of the entropy curve on which we are living. If it should happen that 'later' the universe, after reaching a high-entropy state and staying in it for a long time, enters into a long downgrade of the entropy curve, then, for this section, time would have the opposite direction: human beings that might live during this section would regard as positive time the transition to higher entropy, and thus their time would flow in a direction opposite to ours. Since these two sections of opposite time directions would be separated by aeons of high-entropy states, in which living organisms cannot exist, it would forever remain unknown to the inhabitants of the second time section that their time direction was different from ours.

— Hans Reichenbach

Time Direction and Experience

The temporal order is even more important than the spatial. Reversal of the temporal order is even more destructive of a process than is the reversal of an object in space by turning it upside down; reverse the temporal order, and an experience becomes something other than itself, something quite new.

— Ernst Mach



Time Direction and Natural Facts

Indeed, it is a very interesting intellectual experiment to make the fantasy of an intelligent being whose time should run the other way to our own. To such a being, all communication with us would be impossible. Any signal he might send would reach us with a logical stream of consequents from his point of view, antecedents from ours. These antecedents would already be in our experience, and would have served to us as the natural explanation of his signal, without presupposing an intelligent being to have sent it. If he drew us a square, we should see the remains of his figure as its precursors, and it would seem to be the curious crystallization—always perfectly explainable—of these remains. Its meaning would seem to be 'as fortuitous as the faces we read into mountains and cliffs'. The drawing of the square would appear to us as a catastrophe—sudden indeed, but explainable by natural laws—by which that square would cease to exist. Our counterpart would have exactly similar ideas concerning 'us'.

— Norbert Wiener

Five Minutes Ago

In investigating memory-beliefs, there are certain points that must be borne in mind. In the first place, everything constituting a memory-belief is happening now, not in that past time to which the belief is said to refer. It is not logically necessary to the existence of a memory-belief that the event remembered should have occurred, or even that the past should have existed at all. There is no logical impossibility in the hypothesis that the world sprang into being five minutes ago, exactly as it then was, with a population that 'remembered' a wholly unreal past. There is no logically necessary connection between events at different times; therefore nothing that is happening now or will happen in the future can disprove the hypothesis that the world began five minutes ago. Hence the occurrences which are called knowledge of the past are logically independent of the past; they are wholly analysable into present contents, which might, theoretically, be just what they are even if no past had existed.

— Bertrand Russell



Erasure (of Memory)

[T]he content of memory supervenes on some physical features of the microstate of the observer *O*. Since determinism implies that there is no microscopic erasure, the question arises: what precisely does the macroscopic erasure erase? It is clear that blending [of two memory states] does not erase the memory of *O*. Blending only prevents inferring the actual macrostate in the past [M1] or [M2] from the present macrostate regardless of whether or not *O* remembers the past macrostate. Therefore blending prevents an inference from the present macrostate to the past macrostate only for an observer who has no memory of the past. In this sense the notion of memory erasure may be misleading. Of course, as we know from experience, we do forget things about our past and (since this forgetting cannot be explained by blending because of essential determinism) forgetting means roughly the following. The set of all microstates of, say, the brain states of an observer are partitioned into two subsets: a subset of microstates that somehow generate memory as a mental state and the subset of microstates that do not have this property. In extreme (but not necessarily infrequent) cases, the microstate of the brain evolves into a microstate of the kind that generate no mental state, such as the microstate of a dead brain. Each of the microstates in the first subset is a mental state with some content. Forgetting means that a microstate in the first subset is mapped into the second. But again this mapping has nothing to do with blending.

— Orly Shenker and Meir Hemmo



Trilobite (A Footprint of Life or a Time Cipher Etched in Stone)

With respect to the apparently sudden extermination of whole families or orders, as of Trilobites at the close of the palaeozoic period, and of Ammonites at the close of the secondary period, we must remember what has been already said on the probable wide intervals of time between our consecutive formations; and in these intervals there may have been much slow extermination. Moreover, when, by sudden immigration or by unusually rapid development, many species of a new group have taken possession of an area, many of the older species will have been exterminated in a correspondingly rapid manner; and the forms which thus yield their places will commonly be allied, for they will partake of the same inferiority in common.

— Charles Darwin

The Dinosauroid

'What if troodontids had survived the Cretaceous–Paleogene mass extinction event?' This was the premise of the thought experiment conducted by the paleontologist and curator of vertebrate fossils in the Canadian Museum of Nature, Dale Russell. After studying the fossils of the bird-like troodontid, *Stenonychosaurus*, Russell had noticed that the narrow-clawed lizard had an encephalization quotient (roughly, the ratio of the brain mass to the body mass as an approximate measure of potential cognition) six times higher than any discovered dinosaur. In addition, the troodontid had three semi-manipulative fingers capable of grasping and holding objects, a binocular vision and endothermic metabolism (see *In Warm Blood*). Having incorporated Stephen Jay Gould's notion of evolutionary contingency (see *Rewinding the Tape*) in his thought experiment, Russell hypothesized a unique evolutionary pathway for the troodontid who had outlived a K–Pg extinction event. The product of this evolutionary pathway, according to Russell, was the hypothetical Dinosauroid, a lizard with a similar encephalization quotient, upright standing position, metabolism and cognitive abilities to ours, and which talks in a language made of bird-like songs. Its name within a possible universe could be *Troodon Sapiens*.

Our Ancestors

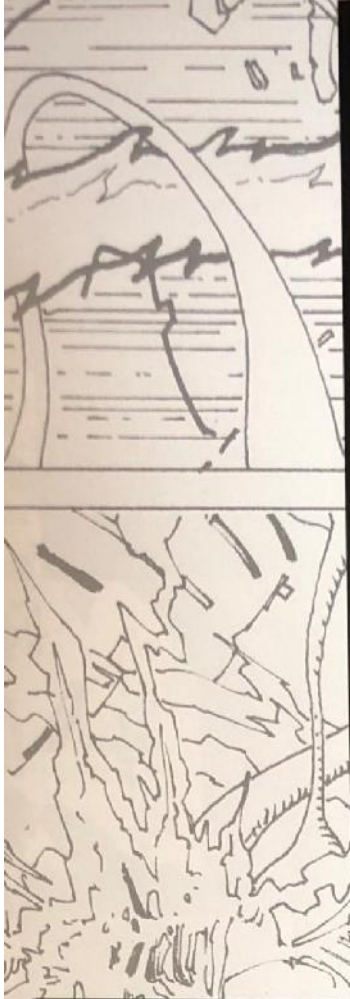
It is a striking fact that none of the extinct species, which, from the abundance of their fossil remains, are well known to us, appear to have been in our own ancestral line. Our ancestors were mostly rather rare creatures.

— William Provine

Rewinding the Tape

I call this experiment 'replaying life's tape.' You press the rewind button and, making sure you thoroughly erase everything that actually happened, go back to any time and place in the past—say, to the seas of the Burgess Shale. Then let the tape run again and see if the repetition looks at all like the original. If each replay strongly resembles life's actual pathway, then we must conclude that what really happened pretty much had to occur. But suppose that the experimental versions all yield sensible results strikingly different from the actual history of life? What could we then say about the predictability of self-conscious intelligence? or of mammals? Or of vertebrates? or of life on land? or simply of multicellular persistence for 600 million difficult years? [...] Rewind the tape into the early Cambrian, and perhaps this time our modern reefs are built by archaeocyathids, not corals. Perhaps no Bikini, no Waikiki; perhaps, also, no people to sip rum swizzles and snorkle amidst great undersea gardens.

— Stephen Jay Gould



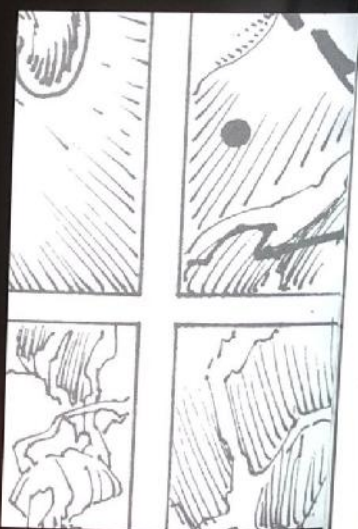
In Warm Blood

'If it walks in upright standing position, then it is warm-blooded' captures the central idea of the dinosaur renaissance of the 1960s espoused by the paleontologist and the author of *Red Dinosaur*, Robert Bakker. Giving a new twist to the evolutionary history, Bakker proposed that the evolutionary trajectory of dinosaurs could only take place in the presence of endothermic metabolic constraints, effectively putting an end in the widely accepted dogma treating dinosaurs as modern cold-blooded reptiles. In Bakker's words:

A very well-preserved segment of fossil history, like the one at Como, permits a computation of how long the average species and genus of dinosaur lasted. And that can be compared with the rates of change computed for warm-blooded animals on the one hand and cold-blooded on the other. Rates of evolutionary change must somehow be linked to the metabolic rate of any given organism. When metabolism is very high, the high physical costs of its living must drive the animal to be an aggressive competitor or predator. And the rapid reproduction typical of warm-blooded animals tends to fill habitats to overcrowded levels much more quickly than the more leisurely breeding schedules characteristic of cold-bloods. An ecological community full of warm-blooded species is therefore a tough environment where the resident species jostle one another for food and water, breeding sites and burrows, all year round. In this sort of environment, the average species will not last long in terms of geological time before it is driven to extinction either by a new species, or by a combination of old species, or by an adverse change of climate.

Worldmaking

At once converging upon and diverting from the colloquial term world-building, Nelson Goodman's concept of worldmaking is an attempt to systematically re-cognize and re-make any existing world (namely, a collection of statements that can be made through a certain frame of reference such as looking at stars from a geo-stationary or a geo-dynamic position). Any world that can be made is a world scrambled together from the ingredients of an old or existing world. But worldmaking is not a capricious enterprise, since its primary task is to create an outside or critical view of the world we already inhabit, as is the case with the world of Copernicus vs that of Ptolemy, or Darwin vs Aristotle. The worlds which are made are less products of making by hand than of crafting by mind. Every world or world-version is therefore in sense an artefact, a manifestation of intelligence which may be in conflict with other possible manifestations which are no less actual. Worlds or world-versions in conflict is then another way of understanding intelligence as its own time.



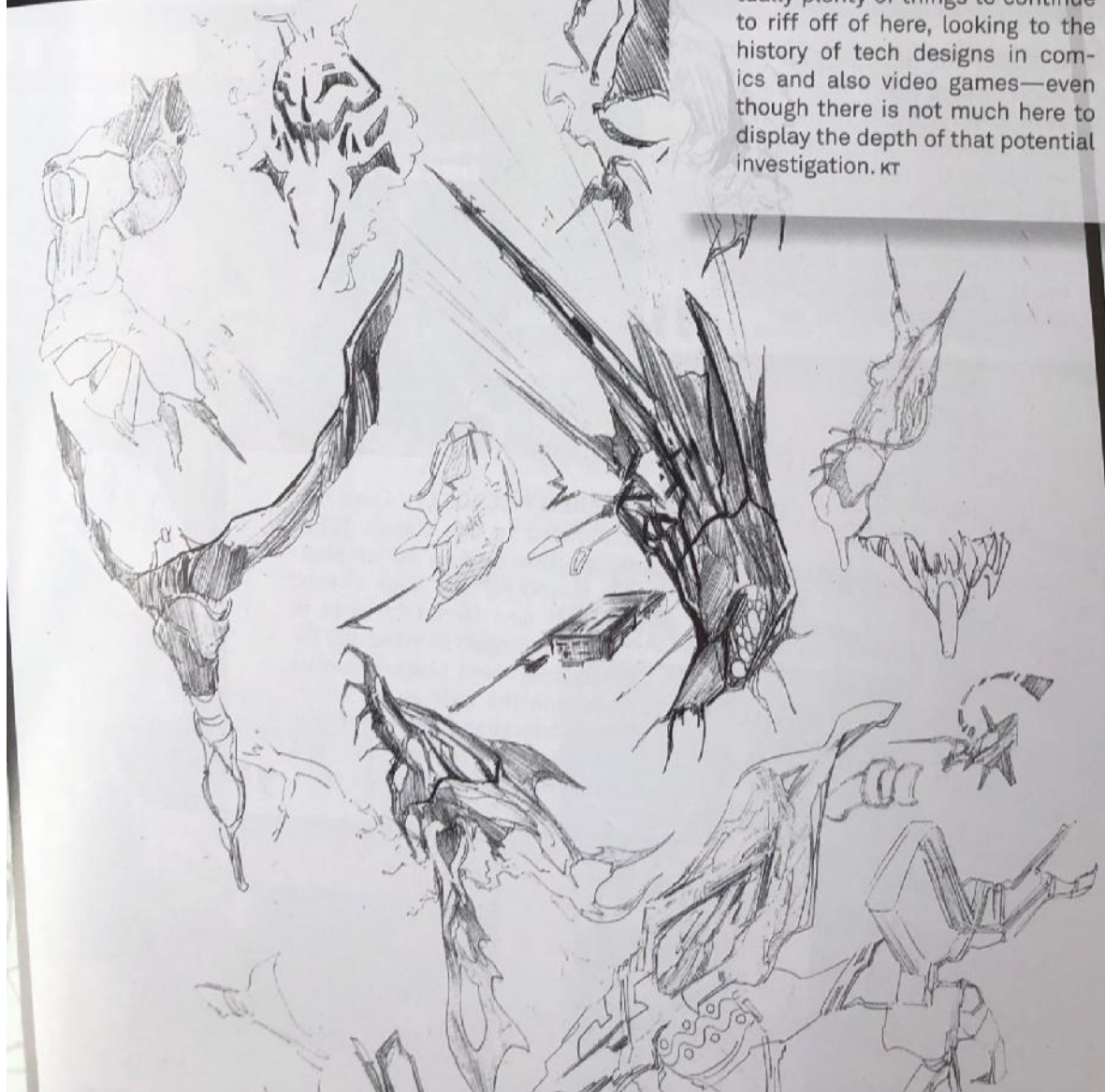
Oumuamua (A Chunk of Stone or an Expeditionary Probe?)

The first question we asked is whether a sail like Oumuamua could survive billions of years in the Milky Way—and we discovered that it could. Being hit by interstellar dust or gas won't wear it down. Afterward, we tried to calculate the acceleration a solar sail would cause in an object [such as a ship or probe], and we found that the acceleration is consistent with that of Oumuamua. [...] We have no way of knowing whether it's active technology, or a spaceship that is no longer operative and is continuing to float in space. But if Oumuamua was created together with a whole population of similar objects that were launched randomly, the fact that we discovered it means that its creators launched a quadrillion probes like it to every star in the Milky Way. Of course, the randomness is significantly reduced if we assume that Oumuamua was a reconnaissance mission that was deliberately sent to the inner solar system—namely, to the habitable region where life would be feasible. But we need to remember that humanity didn't broadcast anything tens of thousands of years ago, when the object was still in interstellar space. They didn't know there was intelligent life here. Which is why I think it's just a fishing expedition.

— Avi Loeb



“ **CONCEPT SKETCHES: WEAPONS /** Some very early sketches for the Time reveal page and the opening vortex page. I ended up going with designs that were less baroque, less Fantasy SF, and more harking back to eighties comics designs, in a sense. However, some of these ideas were retained for when we finally see what Time looks like without its robe, and there are actually plenty of things to continue to riff off of here, looking to the history of tech designs in comics and also video games—even though there is not much here to display the depth of that potential investigation. ”



- Earth is a stable system
- We are alone in the cosmos
- Memory is individual
- Time only flows one way
- Human is a fixed species

TIME TO WAKE UP

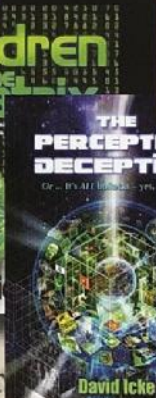


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Infinite Love is the Only Truth
Everything Else is Illusion



How human evolution was controlled by an extraterrestrial molecular parasite – and still is

“



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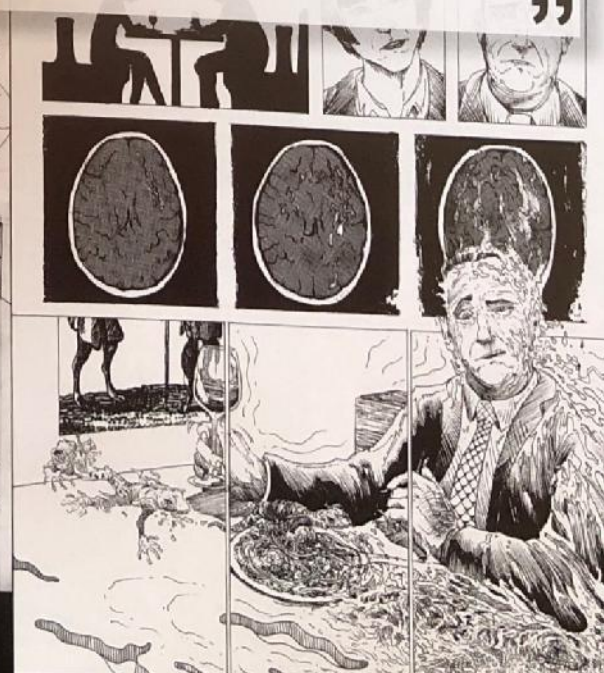
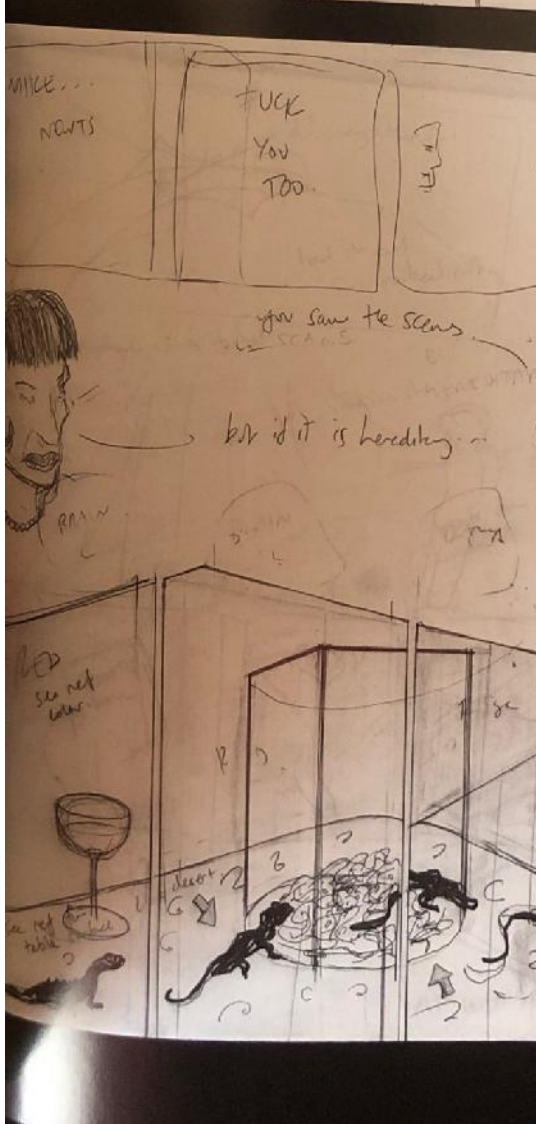
Pop^N - any time

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Loner

THUMBNAILS FROM ROBIN'S SCRIPT / Once we decided to include the JC storyline, I put together some sketches for the page layouts. As a kid it was my ambition to be a comics artist. As you can see, it was not to be.... Seeing my schematic scrawls translated into finely rendered pages was such a rush. RM



Most of the book was done old-school 'Marvel Method', where I just plotted everything out based on early versions of the script from Reza, who gave very little indication, with a few exceptions, of how each page should look (no panel by panel breakdowns of what the reader should see in most cases, just dialogue with some descriptions of what/where the scene was, occasionally accompanied by reference imagery that we tried to work from). This had its benefits, such as getting to weave the story together as I saw fit, adding in pages that weren't called for in the script and even cutting others because I thought they didn't work, but at times it also made the process seem more difficult. So, it was a relief to get these from Robin, and even though I did the same thing (made adjustments and added pages that weren't called for), there was a clearer indication of where to take things. There are definitely pros and cons to each way of working. In the end it was good to have both. KR



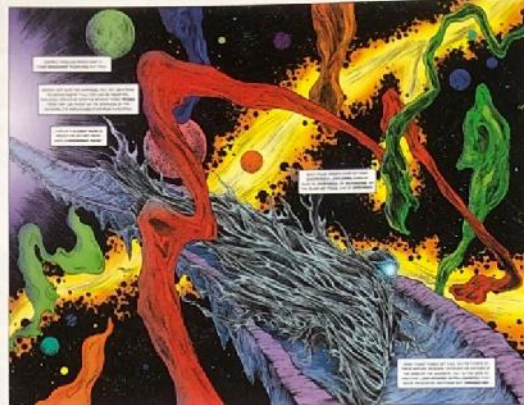
SWIPE GUIDE



After Harry Clarke



After John Romita Jr.
(UXM #184)



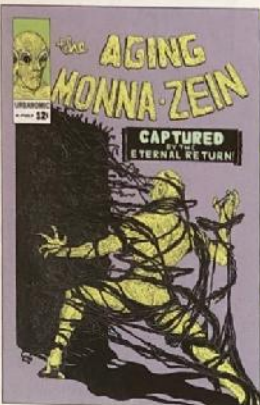
After John Buscema



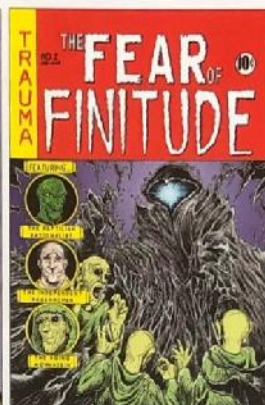
After Frank Miller



Steve Ditko and Jack
Kirby Mashup after
George Perez



After Steve Ditko
(ASM #25)



EC Comics homage
cover



Black Cat Mystery hom-
age cover after Lee Elias



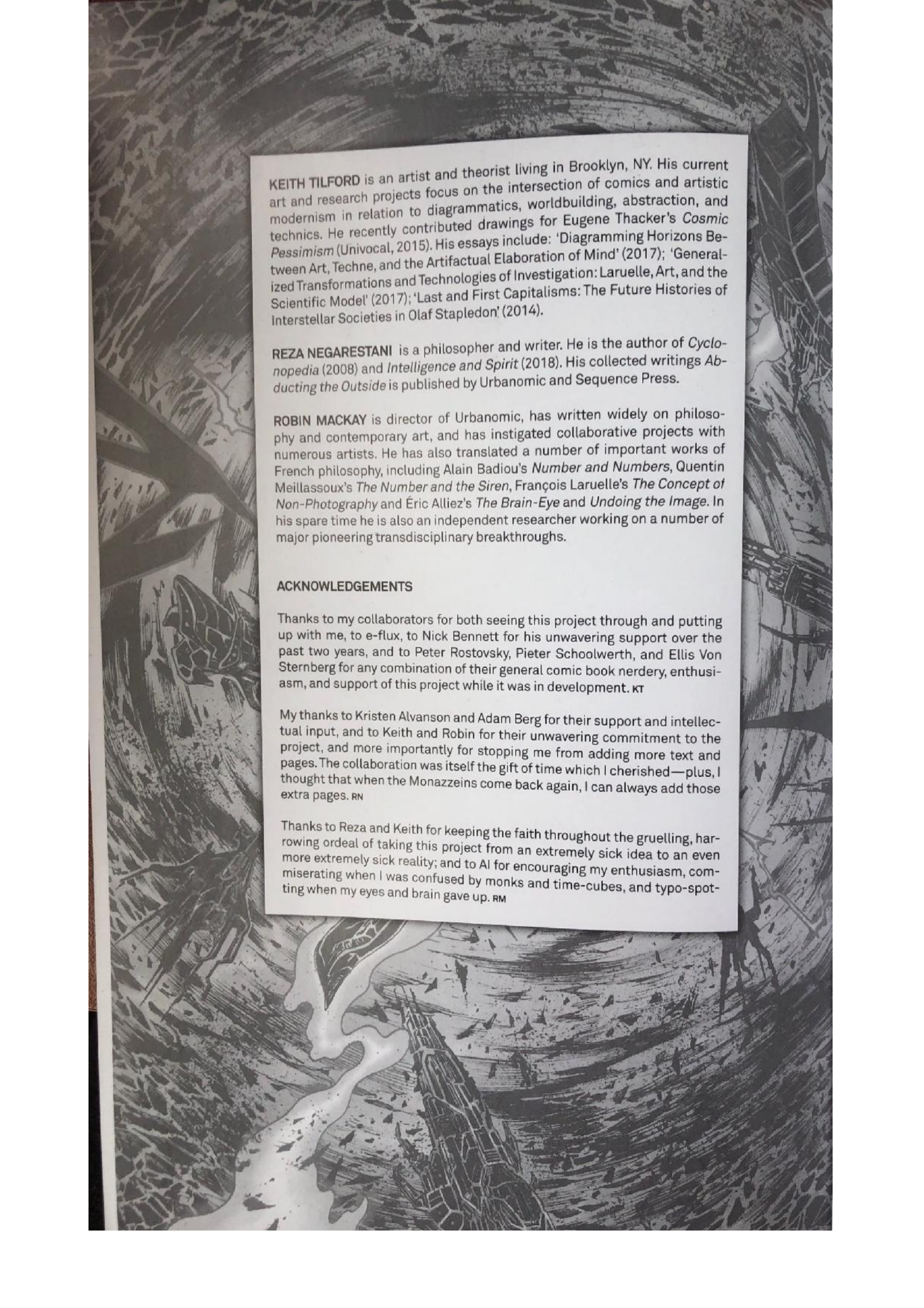
“SEPARATED AT BIRTH? / You'd never believe it to look at him, but Reza is a serious philosopher who has published several mind-bending books. His dramatic hand gestures at this New York lecture back in 2012 supplied some inspiration for Secretary Ödla. ”





“ **CHAMELEON SHADOW** / A piece of rock turns into something living, and something living turns into a piece of rock, a fossil. This trajectory captures a general law-like morphogenetic principle with regard to the forms the inorganic and the organic can adopt. According to this principle, an inorganic structure cannot exhibit the complexities peculiar to the organic form. Conversely, the organic form cannot display the symmetries and simplicity of an inorganic structure. In a nutshell, it would be an odd thing to witness an organic form, or a shape that does not often occur in the lifeless milieu of the inorganic realm. Fossils, however, put a twist on this generalization. When we see a fossil of a Trilobite, we see a piece of rock, but a rock that is evidence of something else, that is to say, life. Accordingly, a hypothetical advanced civilization's cosmic message in a bottle wouldn't be a cipher made in prime numbers, but a natural object, a piece of stone that either evinces life or a shape that shouldn't typically occur in the inorganic realm, whether it is a shape of a cigar, a pancake or a tendrilled tarantula. The alien message would then be an aberration of some sort that puts the burden of explanation on that which has been approached up until now as a fact of nature with no need of explanation. RN ”





KEITH TILFORD is an artist and theorist living in Brooklyn, NY. His current art and research projects focus on the intersection of comics and artistic modernism in relation to diagrammatics, worldbuilding, abstraction, and technics. He recently contributed drawings for Eugene Thacker's *Cosmic Pessimism* (Univocal, 2015). His essays include: 'Diagramming Horizons Between Art, Techne, and the Artifactual Elaboration of Mind' (2017); 'Generalized Transformations and Technologies of Investigation: Laruelle, Art, and the Scientific Model' (2017); 'Last and First Capitalisms: The Future Histories of Interstellar Societies in Olaf Stapledon' (2014).

REZA NEGARESTANI is a philosopher and writer. He is the author of *Cyclo-nopedia* (2008) and *Intelligence and Spirit* (2018). His collected writings *Abducting the Outside* is published by Urbanomic and Sequence Press.

ROBIN MACKAY is director of Urbanomic, has written widely on philosophy and contemporary art, and has instigated collaborative projects with numerous artists. He has also translated a number of important works of French philosophy, including Alain Badiou's *Number and Numbers*, Quentin Meillassoux's *The Number and the Siren*, François Laruelle's *The Concept of Non-Photography* and Éric Alliez's *The Brain-Eye* and *Undoing the Image*. In his spare time he is also an independent researcher working on a number of major pioneering transdisciplinary breakthroughs.

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My thanks to Kristen Alvanson and Adam Berg for their support and intellectual input, and to Keith and Robin for their unwavering commitment to the project, and more importantly for stopping me from adding more text and pages. The collaboration was itself the gift of time which I cherished—plus, I thought that when the Monazzeins come back again, I can always add those extra pages. **RN**

Thanks to Reza and Keith for keeping the faith throughout the gruelling, harrowing ordeal of taking this project from an extremely sick idea to an even more extremely sick reality; and to AI for encouraging my enthusiasm, commiserating when I was confused by monks and time-cubes, and typo-spotting when my eyes and brain gave up. **RM**

CHRONOSIS

Approaching the comic medium as a supercollider for achieving maximum abstraction, in *Chronosis* artist Keith Tilford and philosophers Reza Negarestani (author of *Cyclonopedia* and *Intelligence and Spirit*) and Robin Mackay create a graphically stunning and conceptually explosive universe in which the worlds of pop culture, modern art, philosophy, science fiction, and theoretical physics crash into one another.

Stalking the multiverse, a strange entity manifests itself in different guises, visiting trauma upon whoever encounters it—whether Jeremy Charles, earthbound hawker of paranoid cosmic visions, or the interplanetary order of the Lacars, intent on extending their galactic empire to planet Earth. This is the figure of Time itself, with whose birth the story of *Chronosis* begins.

The ascetic order of the Monazzeins, who dwell nowhere and nowhen, are the only ones to have mastered Time, attempting to build bridges between the many fragmented tribes and histories of multiple possible worlds.

A unique fusion of comics culture and philosophical cogitation, this conceptually and visually mind-expanding tale takes the reader on a dizzying rollercoaster ride through time, space, and thought.



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